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GAMEFAN

THE LAST TRUE ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINE

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 8
AUGUST 1999



MASSIVE RPG BLOWOUT!!!

Final Fantasy VIII

Thousand Arms

Suikoden II

Grandia

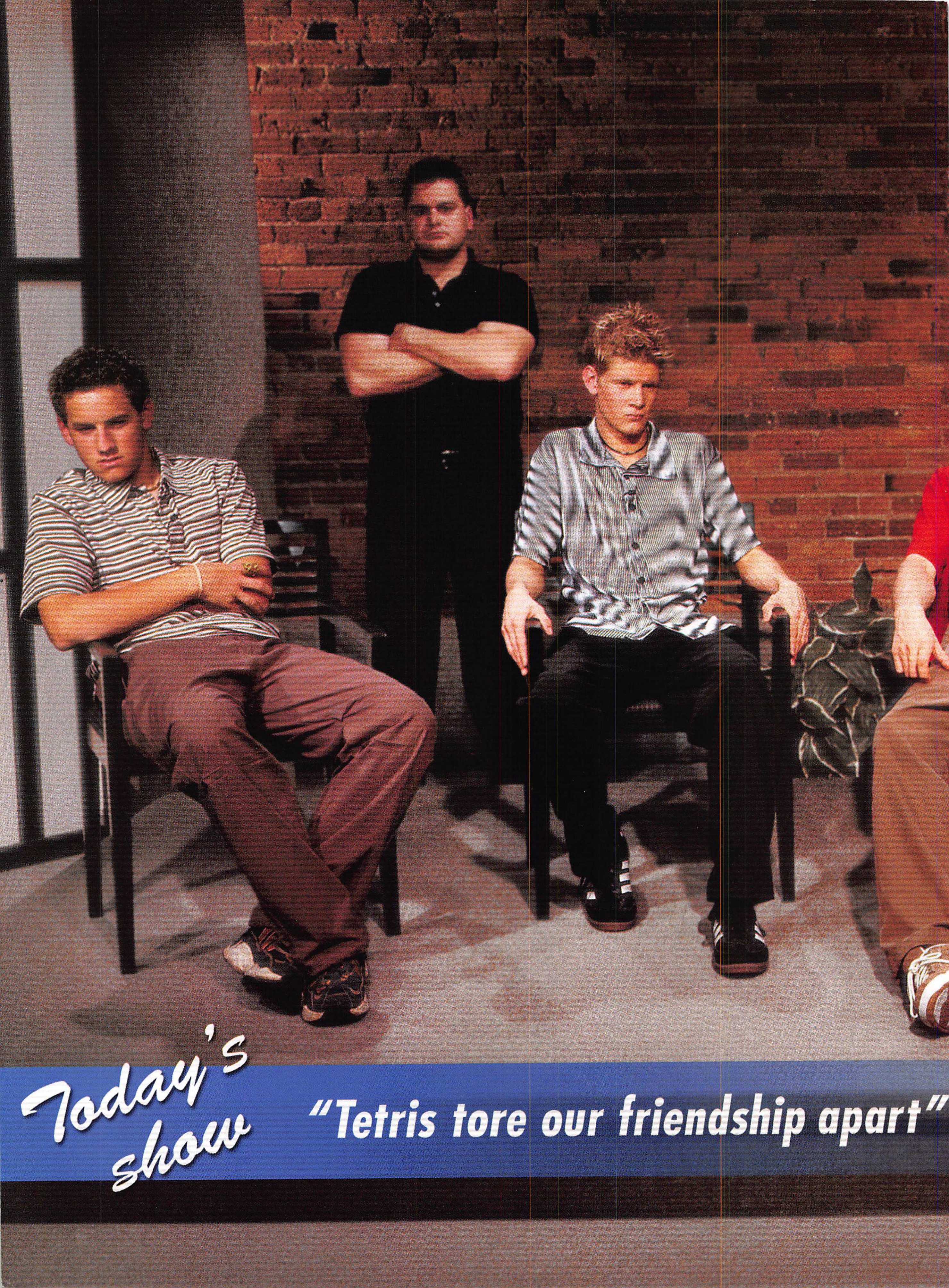
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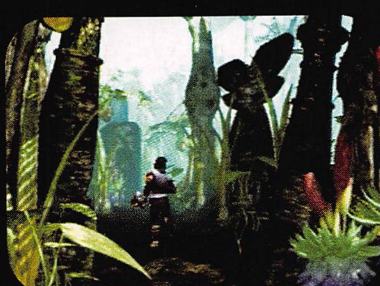
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GAMEFAN ED ZONE

ISSN# 1092-7212

As Dreamcast inches ever closer to a 9-9-99 release, anticipation and hype continue to snowball. As of this writing, Sega is already looking at over 100,000 reservations at the nation's retailers, and KayBee Toys, who didn't even bother carrying Saturn, has just signed on to peddle DC wares (if that's not a vote of confidence...). If retailer sentiment is in any way a gauge of how DC is going to fare in the US, then it's a pretty safe bet that it's going to be a resounding success... at least for the first six months of its life (something Sega desperately needs both here and abroad). And as new games start to roll in on a weekly basis from this date out, it's kinda hard to remember that there are already two very well-established console giants duking it out, in the calm before the coming storm.

Shots have already been fired in the form of a (unofficial) price reduction on both PlayStation and N64 by (again) KayBee Toys — expect other retailers to follow suit shortly. This is good news indeed for gamers everywhere as now nobody has an excuse not to own both (well, maybe starving college students... lord knows I've been there), therefore giving people everywhere a crack at owning the best games on both platforms.

And while some people will put forth the notion that a DC @ $200 can't compete with the others at their new, lower prices (or even their current price), never underestimate the power of little Jimmy during the holiday shopping season, tethered to mommy, besieging her with a barrage of "Can I have it?! Huh, can I?! Please!!!!" Her only recourse being to purchase the console and a slew of games to sate the boy's mad dance of destruction, err... or something like that.

Meanwhile, what do fans of the old hardware have to look forward to? Well, on PlayStation it's all about RPGs! This year's domestic boon started with *Jade Cocoon, Shadow Madness, Legend of Legaia, Lunar: SSSC,* and *Star Ocean 2*, and will soon be joined by Konami's *Suikoden II*, Square's *Final Fantasy VIII* and *Final Fantasy Anthology* (minus *FFIV*, argh!), Atlus' *Thousand Arms,* and SCEA's *Grandia*, <whew>! That's more RPGs in one year than any console in the past has **ever** seen in the same span of time (by at least a 2:1 ratio). The days of RPG gamers not getting what they want are long, long gone with RPGs finally reaching 'cool' status with gamers, as platformers did back in the 16-bit days (all right, so it hasn't *quite* reached those manic levels... **yet**).

N64 fans, while having nearly nothing to look forward to in the RPG realm, do have the stunning *Jet Force Gemini* (with handy 'upgraded' characters), *Donkey Kong 64* and of course the nigh-unbelievable *Perfect Dark* to add to the single best, RPG-less, library in all of gamedom. If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times: If I had to buy one domestic console right now, it'd be from the gamesmiths at Nintendo (hey, we're not all over-the-top RPG-hounds, right?).

As a brief aside from purely magazine-type things, I'm gonna throw in a quick plug for the recently announced GameFan Network, which can be found on the Internet @ www.gamefan-network.com. It features everything you've come to expect from GameFan Online (www.gamefan.com) with a whole slew of new sites geared towards offering you, the enthusiast gamer, the only stop you need to sate your gaming hunger on a daily basis. We're adding sites all the time, and this is one community you **need** to be a part of.

That about wraps this month's 'ECM Diatribe.' Tune in next month, when we'll explore the ramifications of the Internet and its unfathomable ability to turn otherwise intelligent people into raving, babbling idiots (ah, the anonymity and lack of accountability). Till then...

EM
Editorial Director
Eric Mylonas

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TEAM GAMEFAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Volume 7, Issue 8 August 1999

COVER STORY

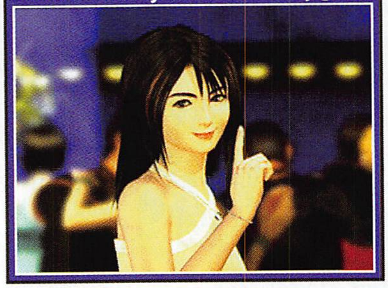


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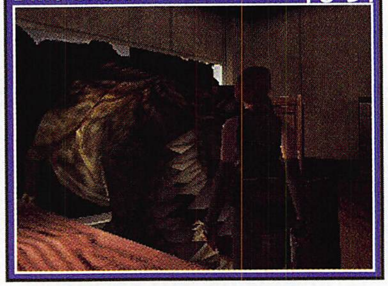
RPG Special 26

Editorial Zone 6
Most Wanted/Top Ten 10
Viewpoints 14
PlayStation 34
Nintendo 64 50
GameFan Sports 60
Japan Now 70
Graveyard 82
AnimeFan 84
Hocus Pocus 90
Other Stuff 100
Postmeister 101

Final Fantasy VIII pg. 20



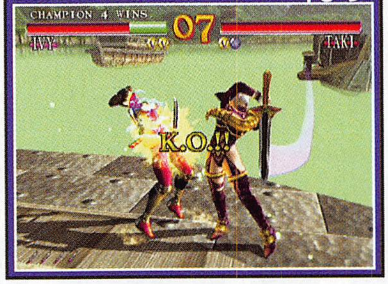
Dino Crisis pg. 34



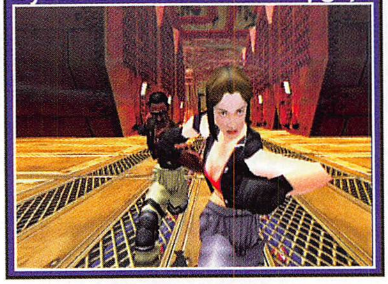
Rayman 2 pg. 52



Soul Calibur pg. 56

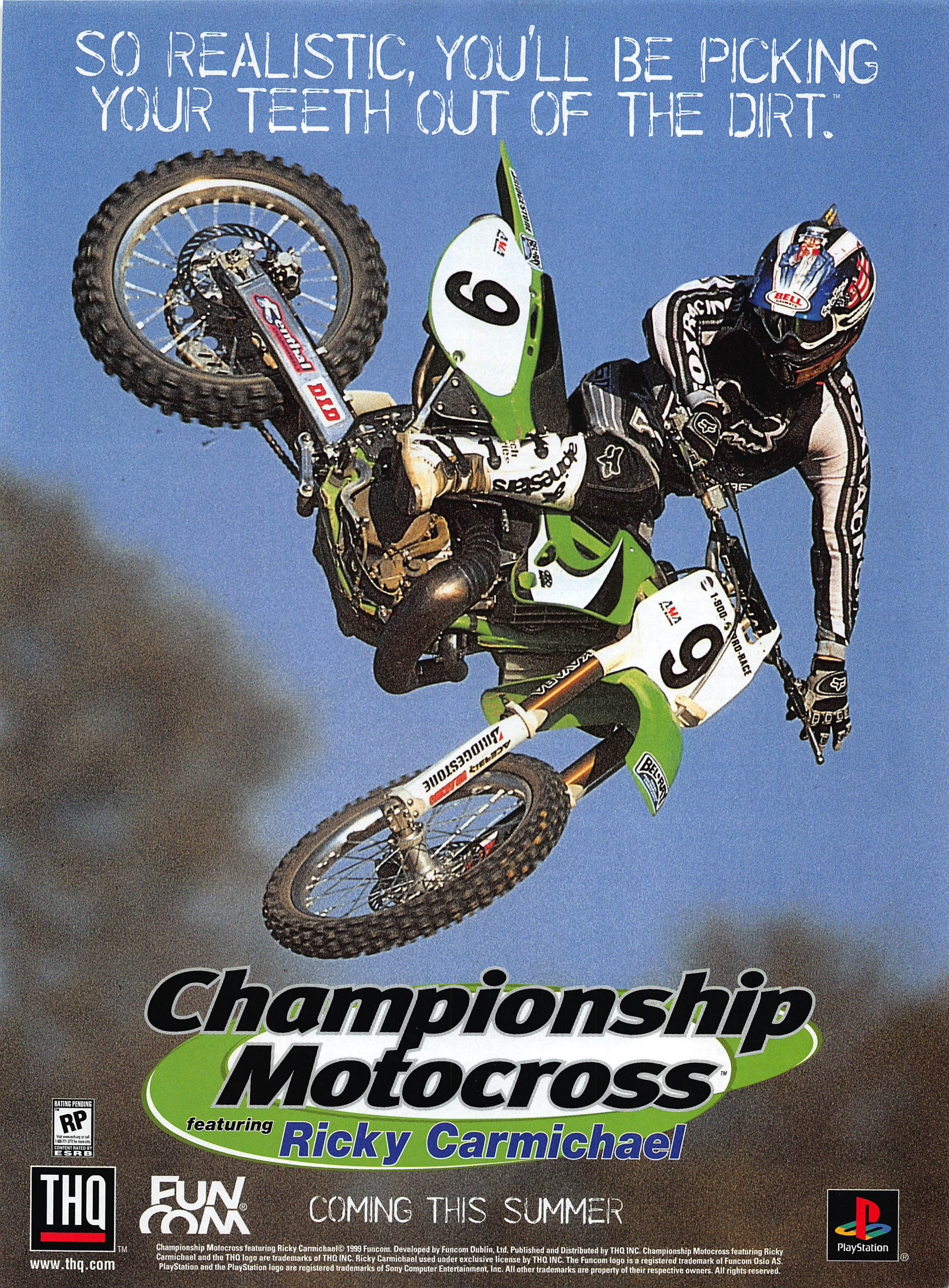


Dynamite Deka 2 pg. 76



GAME INDEX

Ace Combat 3 74
Air Force Delta 58
All-Star Baseball 2000 94
Armorines 55
Army Men 3D 92
Baldur's Gate 33
Blades of Vengeance 58
Climax Landers 33
Command & Conquer 55
Crush Roller (NGP) 69
Detonator Gauntlet 32
Dew Prism 32
Dino Crisis 34
Donkey Kong 64 55
Dragon Quest VII 32
Dynamite Deka 2 76, 92
Earthworm Jim 3D 55
Elemental Gimmick Gear 75
Fatal Fury: First Contact (NGP) 68
Final Fantasy Anthology 32
Final Fantasy VIII 20
Frame Gride 58
Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko 92
Grandia 26
GTA: London 1969 91
Harvest Moon 33
Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster 40
Jade Cocoon 38
Kingsley 44
Konami Arcade Classics 36
Koudelka 32
Langrisser Millenium 33
Legend of Mana 32
London Spirits Detective 32
Lunar 2: Eternal Blue 32
Lunar: Silver Star Story 95
Madden 2000 63
Maken X 58
Mario Golf 72
Medal of Honor 47
Metal Gear Solid VR 48
Metal Slug: First Mission (NGP) 69
Metropolis Street Racer 58
NCAA Football 2000 61
NCAA GameBreaker 2000 60
NFL Blitz 2000 62
NFL GameDay 2000 63
NFL Xtreme 2000 62
NHL 2000 67
NHL FaceOff 2000 67
Ogre Battle 3 33
Pac-Man World 43
Persona 2: Innocent Sin 32
Project Ares 33
Rayman 2 52
Resident Evil 2 50
Resident Evil: Code Veronica 59
Road Rash Unchained 48
Rollcage 93
Saga Frontier 2 32
Samurai Shodown 2 (NGP) 68
Sega NBA 2000 65
Sega NFL 2000 64
Sega NHL 2000 66
Shadow Man 54
Silpheed 94
Sled Storm 46
Soul Calibur 56
Soul of the Samurai 48
Star Wars: Episode 1 Racer 98
Starcraft 55
Street Fighter Alpha 3 59
Suikoden 2 28
Super Robot Wars 73
Tail Concerto 42
Tarzan 45
Thousand Arms 30
Thrasher 41
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 59
Tomorrow Never Dies 48
TrickStyle 59
Triple Play 2000 91
Vandal Hearts 2 33
Vigilante 8 93
Virtual On Oratorio Tangram 70
Warpath 48
Wild Arms: Second Ignition 33
Wild Metal Country 59


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TOP TEN MOST WANTED

August 1999

Super Smash Bros.

Publisher: Nintendo



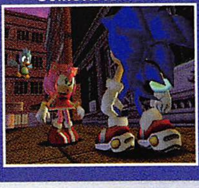
Reader's Top Ten

1) *Super Smash Bros.* - N64
2) *SW: Episode 1 Racer* - N64
3) *Street Fighter Alpha 3* - PS
4) *Syphon Filter* - PS
5) *Ridge Racer Type 4* - PS
6) *Silent Hill* - PS
7) *Zelda: OOT* - N64
8) *Metal Gear Solid* - PS
9) *GoldenEye* - N64
10) *Lunar: Silver Star Story* - PS

Reader's Most Wanted

1) *Sonic Adventure* - DC
2) *Soul Calibur* - DC
3) *Resident Evil 3* - PS
4) *RE: Code Veronica* - DC
5) *Shen Mue* - DC
6) *Final Fantasy VIII* - PS
7) *Dino Crisis* - PS
8) *Perfect Dark* - N64
9) *Metroid* - N2000
10) *Donkey Kong 64* - N64

Sonic Adventure



GameFan Editors' Top Ten

*Import Title



1) *Mario Golf** - N64
2) *Truxton 2* - Arcade
3) *Radiant Silvergun** - SS
4) *Grandia* - PS
5) *M.U.S.H.A.* - Genesis
6) *Crush Roller* - NGPocket
7) *Devil Dice* - PS
8) *Blue Stinger** - DC
9) *Axelay* - SNES
10) *Devil's Crush* - TG-16



1) *Virtual On 2* - Arcade
2) *SamSho II* - NGPocket
3) *Sonic Adventure** - DC
4) *SW: Episode 1 Racer* - N64
5) *Dino Crisis* - PS
6) *Metal Slug* - NGPocket
7) *Dynamite Deka 2** - DC
8) *Star Ocean 2nd Story* - PS
9) *SF2: Hyper Turbo* - Arcade
10) *SF3: 3rd Strike* - Arcade



1) *Crazy Taxi* - Arcade
2) *Parasite Eve* - PS
3) *UmJammer Lammy** - PS
4) *Ridge Racer Type 4* - PS
5) *King of Fighters '98* - NG
6) *Thousand Arms* - PS
7) *SF Alpha 3* - PS
8) *Mr. Bones* - Saturn
9) *Pop'n Music** - DC
10) *Radiant Silvergun** - SS



1) *Streets of Rage 2* - Genesis
2) *Phantasy Star 2* - Genesis
3) *Final Fantasy VIII* - PS
4) *Thousand Arms* - PS
5) *Rayman 2* - N64
6) *NBA Showtime* - Arcade
7) *Star Ocean 2nd Story* - PS
8) *Comix Zone* - Genesis
9) *Quake III Test* - PC
10) *Blue Max* - C64

CERBERUS under construction

1) *Silent Scope* - Arcade
2) *Guitar Freaks* - Arcade
3) *BeatMania 2* - Arcade
4) *Tekken Tag Tourn.* - Arcade
5) *Giga Wing* - Arcade
6) *Ace Combat 3* - PS
7) *Bust-A-Move 2* - PS
8) *Omega Boost* - PS
9) *Konami Arcade Classics* - PS
10) *Zombie Revenge* - Arcade



1) *Might & Magic VII* - PC
2) *Quake II* - PC
3) *Civ: Test of Time* - PC
4) *NBA Showtime* - Arcade
5) *NCAA Football 2000* - PS
6) *SF3: 3rd Strike* - Arcade
7) *Sega NFL 2000* - DC
8) *Sega NBA 2000* - DC
9) *Ready 2 Rumble* - DC
10) *Sled Storm* - PS

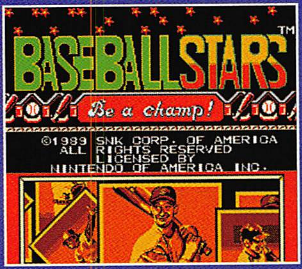
Developer's Top Ten

This Month's Guest: **Tracy Johnson**
Producer, Sega Sports

This was difficult to trim down to ten but here goes:

1. *Baseball Stars* - NES
2. *Robotron* - Arcade
3. *Tecmo Football* Series
4. *NBA Live '97* - Genesis
5. *NHL '94* - Genesis
6. *World Series* - Saturn
7. *Shining Force* - Genesis
8. *NBA Jam* - Arcade
9. *Dark Wizard* - Sega CD
10. *Defender* - Arcade

Baseball Stars



Publisher: SNK

"All these games spent many hours in my home system or took many of my quarters and study time while in college. Sports has normally been my favorite genre and *Baseball Stars* was the game to have early on. Games have come a long way since then, but I still occasionally play the old ones. All the above titles will slip down the chart once Sega Sports' *NBA* is released. It will be the new standard by which all other hoops games will be judged. Stay tuned."



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EDITOR ROUNDUP

ecm@gamefan.com



ECM

With a temperament only a rabid wolverine could love, ECM isn't the easiest chap to work for. While most GF eds wouldn't trade their jobs for anything, they'd endure colonostomies, boric acid enemas, and even algebra for a brief respite from his 'friendship.'

cerberus@gamefan.com

Under Construction

CERBERUS

Newly-hired exec ed Cerberus' (formerly of T&T fame) bizarre fascination with dancing games, hair coloring (blue, mainly), and Erasure has led the other eds to question what exactly goes on after hours with T&T's predominantly male staff... <shudder>.

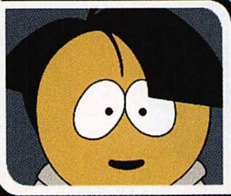
elnino@gamefan.com



EL NINO

Es información pública que El Niño gasta mucho de su tiempo durante horas de trabajo jugando *Everquest* y *Quake II*. Ahora este chico enorme aspira ser un Dark Elf muy potente en *Everquest*... Lo hemos perdido. Too bad he doesn't understand this either.

eggo@gamefan.com



EGGO

When he's not breaking up marriages, beating people down in *Street Fighter*, and making ECM feel tall, Eggo vainly tries to convince the rest of GameFan that "*Racing Lagoon* isn't that bad..." and "No, really, I am Asian...I just don't eat that way."

dangohead@gamefan.com



DANGOHEAD

GameFan's resident codes and strategy editor recently met the news of a sudden shift in responsibilities that now includes GameFan Online with stoic determination and typical Dango-esque flair: "Why God! Why me...what did I ever do to you?! Argh!!!"



THE 6th MAN

Who is the mysterious 6th man? Only the Shadow knows (oh, and ECM). Figuring that while he was 'borrowing' the ed round-up from Cerberus' former home, he also thought that it would be cool to snag some 'sushi' from a certain other nameless mag.

THE ART DEPARTMENT

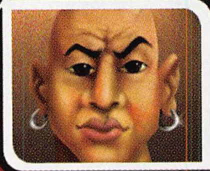
reubus@gamefan.com



REUBUS

When not regaling the GF staff with tales of his 'Navy days' or North Dakota, Reubus can be found not saving money at the local Tower Records.

waka@gamefan.com



WAKA

Waka is currently experiencing marital problems because of his new-found love... *EverQuest*. "Server is not responding." And now, neither is his wife...

tao@gamefan.com

Under Construction

TAO

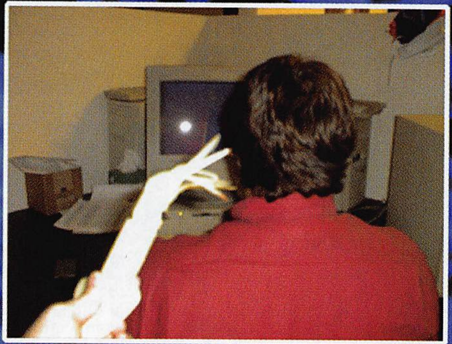
Tao has set a *GF* record for creating the most illegible layouts ever to appear in a single issue of GameFan...his excuse, "that @#$% squid made me do it!"

PRODUCTIVITY KILLER OF THE MONTH



Height: 6.43 in
Weight: 3.2 oz
Blood Type: O
Special Abilities: Tickler or the almighty Pimp-Slap™.

You'd think that a life of video games would be easy, but it's not. With so many toys and games under one roof, it's easy to get distracted from your 'work.' Often one item will either draw a crowd or cause such a stir that all office productivity comes to a screeching halt. This month, that item is The Squid. Nobody knows where it came from, but Waka is the one usually wielding it. In addition to being a glowing phallic symbol, The Squid has been known to Pimp-Slap™ unsuspecting editors on their mouse hand if they're working too hard.

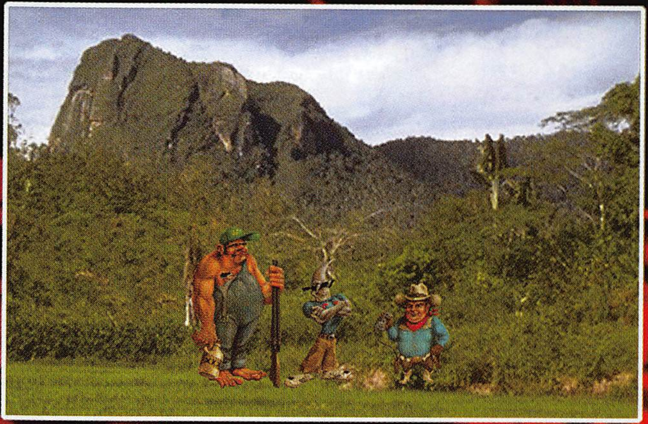


Squid-cam! Watch the Squid as it adroitly stalks its prey — an unsuspecting *GF*-ed whom will soon be the recipient of an especially vicious Pimp-Slap™.

This month in GameFan's BOX-O-FUN!

GF WORLD TOUR

Ocassionally, *GF* editors are not content to just play video games. Seeking more in life, these malcontents fled the cave deep in Woodland Hills in search of greener pastures. But we know they have fans who want to know what they're up to. Lucky for us, Big Bubba, Super Teeter, and the Video Cowboy sent us this postcard from Madagascar, Pop. 13.4 million plus three, lost amongst 226,658 square miles of rice and grassland.



CHICKEN OF THE MONTH

"Chicken" — The *GameFan* term for swag, loot, or all the free stuff we get for being video game editors. In the interest of filling space, we've decided to take up a whole paragraph every month showing off the best chicken we have which you don't. This month's Super Chicken is the mini *Marvel vs. Capcom* arcade cabinet that ECM won at a recent Capcom E3 tournament. Notice that the height of the cabinet is perfectly suited for its <ahem> mini owner.







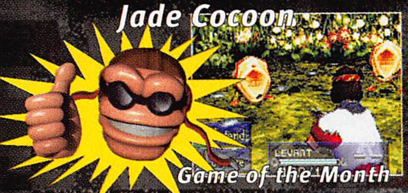
SAUSAGE OF THE MONTH

Our sausage (*GF* term for the super-skilled, hardcore, all-knowing, psycho gamer... a.k.a. loser **or** Dangohead!) of the month is Amir Amirsaleh. This picture comes from the *Street Fighter II* ECC. It's funny, because many of us have met him before. A permanent resident of the UCLA arcade from the age of 10, Amir was nicknamed "Gogo" after the character in *Final Fantasy III* because his super-skillz allowed him to mimic any combo you performed on him after seeing it just once. If you wish to be *GF's* "Sausage of the Month," send in your picture and sausage sob story care of the Postmeister, and you could be immortalized in the hallowed pages of *GameFan* — at your expense!





VIEWPOINT









Cerberus — under construction

G — Graphics
C — Control
P — Play Mechanics
M — Music
O — Originality



Ape Escape
PlayStation
SCEA
Platform

If there was ever a game created to cater to me, in concept, it would be *Ape Escape*. Sure sounded good, didn't it? Mandatory Dual Shock control, years in development, Sony's 'next big thing'... heck, it's even original — wonder of wonders on the PlayStation! While I could call this game ill-conceived, uninspired, and downright boring, I'll simply call it *Blasto 2: The Next Generation*, and leave it at that. Next please...

G 7 C 6 P 5 M 6 O 10 — **60**

While I'm all for games that fully utilize the Dual Shock, I have the feeling that "showing off the dual analogs" took priority over fun game design in *Ape Escape*. It plays more like a constant exercise than a game. Maybe when *Ape Escape 2* comes out, they'll let training take a backseat to some decent play mechanics. I'm not a fan of scavenger hunt 3D games, even if there are monkeys in it. Still, everything else about this game is cool...

G 8 C 8 P 5 M 7 O 8 — **75**

What can I say? I love games that use the Dual Shock analog controller. *Ape Escape* makes good use of a function that is rarely ever utilized. Premise and characters are definitely skewed towards a younger audience, but so was Crash — and it was still a very fun game. If you don't like cutesy-style platform games then stay away. Overall, *Ape Escape* is a solid platform package that continues the gaming experience that *Crash* started.

G 7 C 8 P 7 M 6 O 8 — **85**



Jade Cocoon
PlayStation
Crave
Role Playing

While wrangling monkeys ain't my cup o' java, wrangling monsters certainly is! While we'll all have to wait a little longer for Tecmo and *Monster Rancher 2*, you could fill that void with *Jade Cocoon* for the time being. Fantastic backgrounds and uber-fun monster-mixing conspire to create an RPG with actual replay value (the madness!). Crave passed on PS *Grandia* for this one, and while I question that, this is a solid second choice.

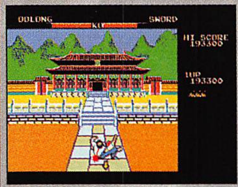
G 8 C 7 P 8 M 7 O 8 — **87**

The idea of combining an *FF7*-like RPG with *Monster Rancher* sounded like a dream come true. Spending some quality time with *JC*, it's not exactly what I expected, but it's still a nice package. Nice visuals, cool ideas, and great voice acting make this a strong title, despite that it's kind of slow to start off with (not on the same level as *Xenogears* tho... Zzzzz). I'm not a fan of the music (Zamfir, maybe?), but give it a try before you buy.

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 7 O 8 — **84**

With a solid lineup of role-playing games to look forward to this year, PlayStation owners are in for a treat. *Jade Cocoon* ups that number by one. The character design is by the creator of Totoro — something which I really liked. It's a breathtaking break from the norm. I really dig the idea of capturing monsters and using them later. Though slow at times, the game isn't without its flaws; some of the backgrounds are confusing.

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 7 — **80**



Konami Classics
PlayStation
Konami
Retro

Shaolin's Road is probably the only game on this disc that I'd consider playing for more than 15 minutes — the others are nice as a brief diversion (and for ruining any sense of nostalgia I once felt, <argh>). Beyond that, I'd like someone to explain to me why Konami is allowed to publish this, while Capcom can't release certain chapters of *Capcom Generations* in the States. Something's rotten in Denmark, Sony...

G 3 C 7 P 5 M 3 O 9 — **73**

While Dangohead and Cerberus are seriously smitten with *Yie-Ar Kung Fu* and this whole collection, I'm with ECM on this one. Old games don't usually age well, and if you're playing this game for more than 45 minutes, I'll be shocked. At first, I wanted to see a collection of Konami games like *Rush N' Attack* and *Jailbreak*, but after seeing how *Yie-Ar* has aged less than gracefully, I'm not so sure any more... A rental... if that.

G 4 C 7 P 8 M 5 O 1 — **73**

Okay, you know these games don't look good. You know all these games are hella old. Fortunately, these reasons won't deter me from highly recommending *Konami Classics*. Bringing back memories of *Super Cobra* and *Time Pilot* was almost enough to make this hardened dango shed a tear. But the real gem in this collection is *Yie-Ar* <sniff> *Kung Fu* (grabbing box of tissues). Having *Yie-Ar* is reason enough to buy this title.

G 6 C 8 P 9 M 7 O 5 — **88**



Tonic Trouble
Nintendo 64
UbiSoft
3D Platformer

If (and this is a very strong 'if') *TT* hadn't shown up with our preview copy of *Rayman 2*, I may have enjoyed *TT* more (doubtful, but possible). Unfortunately, *TT* is a poor man's *Rayman 2* (and a very poor man at that). Lackluster in almost every way (music, graphics, control), after playing *RM2* extensively, this is pretty much unforgivable. How this game was even spawned from the same vat as *RM2* is beyond my ken... stay away!

G 5 C 5 P 5 M 5 O 5 — **55**

The trouble with *Tonic* isn't the game... rather, it's the competition, which is also Ubi-inspired, and light years ahead. *Rayman 2* shows up *TT* in every category: visuals, gameplay, fun, control and polish. *Tonic's* gameplay is decent, but I get the feeling this game was rushed (is that Rayman on the horizon?). If it had come out a year ago, *Tonic* would have scored higher. But, Ubi's better half is just too close to get into this one.

G 6 C 6 P 8 M 4 O 8 — **73**

Uhh, I don't like this game. It's an exercise in tedium. I know Eggo loves these kind of games, he'll play anything. With the Nintendo 64 in serious need of quality games third parties need to step up the pace. *Rayman 2*, that I like, but I'm not really sure this is from the same company. Did the "B" team handle development? Audio-visually, presentation is extremely poor. Crying shame because this could have been so much more.

G 6 C 7 P 6 M 5 O 6 — **66**



Dynamite Deka 2
Dreamcast (import)
Sega
Action

Good clean fun. A bunch of weapons, explosions, and baddie after baddie... more meat for the Eggo grinder. There's a lot to like about *Dynamite Deka 2*, but everyone who picks up the controller says the same thing, "What?! It's over already?" Because of the length, I recommend renting over buying. Still, it's an impressive initial effort for a DC beat 'em up. Much, much better than *Fighting Force* on any system (Kill me!).

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 6 — **82**

Short term fun. That's what this game is about. When you first play *DD2*, its non-stop action, cool weapons, and bruising hand-to-hand attacks. But, the game isn't hard at all (except for the Rugal-like cheapass end boss), and while finishing all the missions will open up more missions, it's like eating another bag of Double Stuff Oreos after having gobbled a bag before in five minutes. Good rental, but not a great buy.

G 9 C 8 P 7 M 8 O 5 — **81**

I played *DieHard Arcade* (*Deka's* prequel), but like *The House of the Dead*, the sequel didn't hit me like the original. Part of this is based on the fact that I've played *Zombie Revenge* and know that it's on its way to the DreamCast. Fast-paced and very playable, *Dynamite Deka 2* isn't as long as one would expect. There's enough here to keep you busy until *Zombie Revenge*. It looks much better than its arcade cousin. Try it.

G 9 C 8 P 6 M 6 O 6 — **79**

E.G.G.


E.G.G.
Dreamcast (import)
Hudson
Action/RPG

under construction

I can't bring myself to like *E.G.G.*, but in the same respect, I don't entirely dislike *E.G.G.* Sure, the battle system and character design isn't anything new, yet there is something about *E.G.G.* that remind me of RPGs I played on the Genesis and SNES. The hand-drawn backgrounds look really clean — reminding me of *Saga Frontier 2*. If this makes it over to our side of the hemisphere, some improvements will need to be made.

G 7 C 7 P 6 M 7 O 7 **74**

I admit that I didn't finish *EGG*, but you don't have to play five minutes into the game to know that *EGG* is average. Bad animation, boring battles, and uninspiring music make this title, just plain... blech. There are some colorful 2D visuals, and a strange story, but a first generation RPG on the DC should at least be, in my opinion, above average. *EGG* is just plain average, bordering on boring crap. RPG fans will just have to wait longer...

G 8 C 8 P 6 M 7 O 7 **71**

...and the DC RPG vigil continues... How many *Beyond the Beyonds* must we see before our first *Suikoden*? I thought *EGG* was it, I thought this was goin' to be the one... But this game is summed up in one word: disappointing. Maybe my expectations were high, but with a new console, you expect a lot, right? *EGG* never manages to rise above mediocrity. There's still hope out there with *Climax Landers* and *Project Ares*, but not this...

G 6 C 8 P 6 M 7 O 7 **72**

Street Fighter 3


Street Fighter 3
Arcade
Capcom
Fighting

We all know *HyperFighting* is the pinnacle of *SF* perfection. And when we got our hands on *3rd Strike*, I was skeptical about *Turtle Parry Fighter*. However, even despite the overpowering parry system (with the red parry added to make it even more of a parry-fest) I thoroughly enjoyed *3rd Strike*. While the new characters aren't that fun to play, minus Makoto (aka Akane Tendo), I would definitely play this in the arcades. And so should you.

G 9 C 9 P 8 M 9 O 6 **92**

I know what you're all thinking, "It's Street Fighter... Eggo has to like it, right?" Wrong. I like *Street Fighter II*, not *III*. While I don't think parrying is as bad as everyone makes it out to be, I don't consider any of the *III's* to be my favorite. I'd much rather play *Alpha 2* or *Turbo Hyperfighting* than *SFIII: Third Strike*. It's not a bad game, and I will play it, but my heart lies elsewhere... back in the glory days of redizzy combos, classic matchups, and CPS-2.

G 9 C 9 P 8 M 7 O 3 **87**

This is about as close to perfection as *SF3* is going to get (a good thing too, since it's the last one) with stunning color and brilliant animation. The problem with all of that is the damn parrying is still busted. It would have been great if there was some sort of parry meter (aping *SFA3's* block meter) to cut down on relentless reverse turtle battles (the first one to get a punch in wins). Still, a great game that never got the attention it deserved.

G 9 C 9 P 8 M 5 O 7 **88**

Crush Roller


Crush Roller
Neo Geo Pocket Color
SNK
Puzzle

under construction

Pac-Man for the Neo Geo Pocket, that's *Crush Roller*. The basic idea is the same, but the objective is different. Instead of consuming all on-screen pellets you must paint the entire playfield with a given color. While you do this, non-descript enemy creatures attempt to rain on your parade. *Crush Roller* is a decent cross of puzzle with arcade action. I'd prefer the real *Pac-Man*, but if this is all we're getting, I'll deal with it.

G 6 C 7 P 9 M 7 O 7 **84**

I hate addicting games... but in a good way. Example? *Crush Roller*. You are a paintbrush. Your job? Paint a neighborhood street, while avoiding those viciously, cute, tadpole-like monsters. Sounds easy, right? Sure it is. Think you can play only one game? I bet you the *Virtual On* machine I don't have that you not only cannot, but you will not. *CR* will make you cry in frustration as you play, but you won't be able to stop playing.

G 8 C 7 P 8 M 8 O 7 **89**

Among the crop of NGPC games this month, this and *Metal Slug* are my two recommended titles. While *MS* is for shooter fans, this is like *Pac-Man* without the dots. Very easy, quick to pick up, and great for playing a short time when you have some idle minutes. Even casual gamers will appreciate *Crush Roller's* simplicity. Because painting roads is not exactly rocket science, I'm not sure you'd call it a puzzle game, though.

G 7 C 7 P 9 M 8 O 8 **87**

Fatal Fury


Fatal Fury
Neo Geo Pocket Color
SNK
Fighting

under construction

Good fighting games rock, no matter what console they happen to be on. *Fatal Fury* is a perfect Mini-Me sized version of Neo Geo's ex-flagship fighter. Combined that with the Neo Geo Pocket's super-responsive D-pad, and you're left with another must-own fighting game. Heck, go outdoors and play this one in the sunlight; the colors come through like never before. Speedy gameplay and nice stereo tunes — I can't complain.

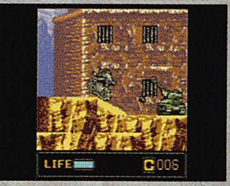
G 7 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 6 **83**

Another Neo Geo fighting game? 'Scuse me while I try to contain my excitement... <long uncomfortable pause> Did I mention I don't like SNK fighting games? Never liked the way they played... and after playing *Street Fighter II* in arcades competitively for over six years, can you blame me for pitching my tent in Capcom's corner, as opposed to the competition? I do admire the bountiful animation... and I'm not just talkin' Mai either.

G 8 C 7 P 6 M 7 O 7 **76**

This is easily third-best out of three. While Terry Bogard is still one of my fav fighting game character designs ever, it's time to put the *Fatal Fury* series to sleep (just make sure Terry and Mai keep going in *KoF* and I'll be happy). While Dango was apparently pretty enthralled with it (too many blows to the head, I guess) I'd recommend the other Pocket fighters WAY before I'd push this on anyone (file it away with *SamSho 3D*).

G 7 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 7 **73**

Metal Slug 1st Mission


Metal Slug 1st Mission
Neo Geo Pocket Color
SNK
Action

under construction

I'm not sure if I like the Neo Geo Pocket conversion of *Metal Slug*. Too much was left on the cutting room floor in the transition for me to remain quiet. The music is by far the worst I've heard on the Neo Geo Pocket. And the colors don't pop out like in other games for the tiny system. The dreaded *Metal Slug* attack has been axed. If you can look the other way, *Metal Slug* still proves to be very much an action-filled arcade-style game.

G 7 C 8 P 7 M 4 O 5 **75**

There should be a Nobel Prize in the video game industry, whoever thought of taking all the great action and personality from *Metal Slug* and making it portable is a genius — not that ECM or I haven't made that suggestion before. While using the "Option" button to switch between your gun and grenades is a tad bit annoying, there isn't much more I can ask for in *Metal Slug: 1st Mission*... well, except *Metal Slug: 2nd Mission*!

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 7 **90**

This game is decidedly *Metal Slug*, which is a good thing... but something just doesn't feel right. All the elements are there for me to like this game a lot, but the action just isn't as intense on the NGPC as it is in the arcade. On the other hand, I like the music, and the play is still fun and addicting, albeit... smaller in scale and less exciting than its arcade counterpart. Hitting option to switch to grenades is annoying, but you can get used to it.

G 8 C 7 P 8 M 9 O 6 **84**

Samurai Shodown 2


Samurai Shodown 2
Neo Geo Pocket Color
SNK
Fighting

under construction

Samurai Shodown has always been one of my favorite fighters, sans the 3D attempts. I can't believe the Neo Geo Pocket can pull off what it has. *Samurai Shodown* is a testament to SNK engineers in Japan. In-game backdrops have animation and change from round to round. Most of the *Samurai* favorites are represented as well — plus some new faces. The audio is low key, but some tunes are hot, like Nakururu's. My money is ready...

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 7 **89**

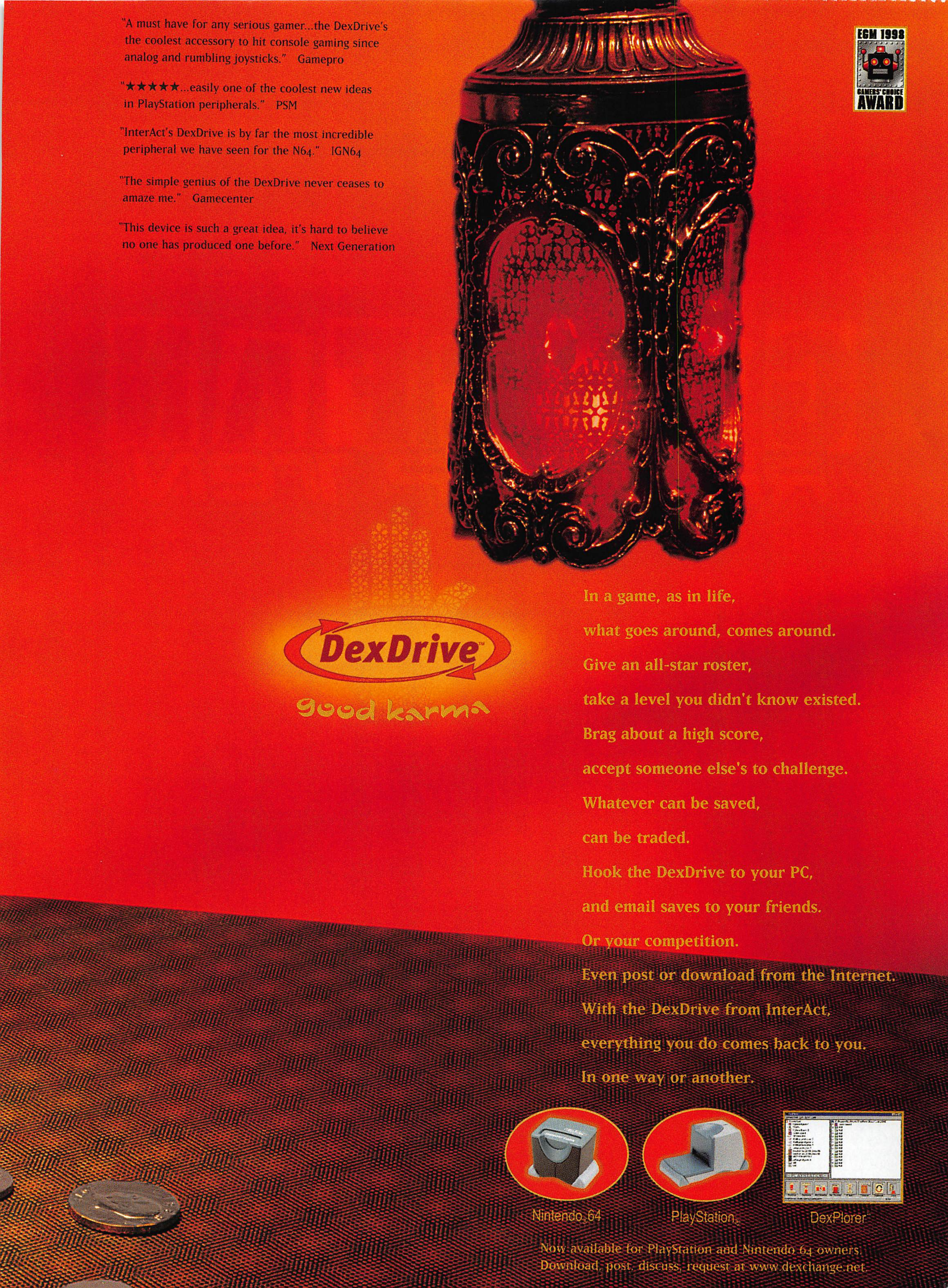
It's not fair, I know, but NeoGeo fighters have never done it for me. Try as I might to like 'em, *Street Fighter II* has always been the one I keep going back to (I know, the whole Capcom programmers leaving for SNK, blah blah, but still...). I just don't like the way this game plays, despite all its character. However, if you're a psycho Neo Geo freak who has dreams of Blue Mary (aka Shidoshi), don't let my judgment sway your purchase.

G 7 C 7 P 6 M 7 O 7 **72**

This is the fighting game goods. While *Fatal Fury* was a tad lackluster, *SamSho* suffers from no such tarnish. Taking all the gameplay that made earlier arcade versions classics (chapters 1 & 2), with fantastic visuals and blazing gameplay (imagine that, a portable fighting game that plays well). BTW, this game is part of SNK's parole after the utter tragedy of two ill-fated ventures into the world of 3D *SamSho*, <blech>.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 6 **89**


NEED A SAVE
TAKE A SAVE
GOT A SAVE
GIVE A SAVE
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"A must have for any serious gamer...the DexDrive's the coolest accessory to hit console gaming since analog and rumbling joysticks." Gamepro
"★★★★★...easily one of the coolest new ideas in PlayStation peripherals." PSM
"InterAct's DexDrive is by far the most incredible peripheral we have seen for the N64." IGN64
"The simple genius of the DexDrive never ceases to amaze me." Gamecenter
"This device is such a great idea, it's hard to believe no one has produced one before." Next Generation
EGM 1998
GAMERS' CHOICE AWARD
DexDrive
good karma
In a game, as in life,
what goes around, comes around.
Give an all-star roster,
take a level you didn't know existed.
Brag about a high score,
accept someone else's to challenge.
Whatever can be saved,
can be traded.
Hook the DexDrive to your PC,
and email saves to your friends.
Or your competition.
Even post or download from the Internet.
With the DexDrive from InterAct,
everything you do comes back to you.
In one way or another.
Nintendo 64
PlayStation
DexPlorer
Now available for PlayStation and Nintendo 64 owners.
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There was a time when gamers cried foul about the lack of role-playing games. But it looks like those dark days are behind us, because there's a slew of RPGs poised to crowd your Christmas stocking this year. Enough so, in fact, that we've dedicated much of this issue to informing you of what titles to look for later this year.

Funny how almost all the RPGs coming this year are on the PlayStation. It's certainly the platform of choice to develop for if you're doing an RPG. So where, I ask you, are the N64 and Dreamcast (granted, it's still early) RPGs? We know both systems are more than capable of delivering some incredible stories replete with eye-glazing graphics and mind-blowing music. So why are non-PS owners on the outside lookin' in, clutching copies of *Quest 64* and *Evolution*? True, there is hope on the horizon with *Ogre Battle N64* and *Baldur's Gate* on the DC with promised Internet play... but what lies beyond that? Let's hope there's more to cheer about next year for Nintendo and Sega owners.... Now without further ado, flip the pages and peruse GameFan's RPG blowout.

So Tell Us, Eggo, What Makes an RPG an RPG?

This messy little question has stymied more minds than 'what's the meaning of life', 'and 'is Shidoshi man, woman, or a little of both' (we'll probably never know the answer to the latter). However, for our purposes, we'll define an RPG as any game that features an element of 'leveling up' and 'experience' gaining melded to a storyline that develops in a meaningful way as the game unfolds (yes, it's a bit amorphous, but it's the best we could come up with). For instance, while you do gain experience in *Castlevania: SotN*, the lack of an unfolding storyline prohibits it from attaining true RPG status. Armed with that knowledge, let's dive face-first into GameFan's Top Ten RPGs!

GAMEFAN RPG TOP TEN

Eggo's Top 10 RPGs

1) Final Fantasy III (SNES) — The pinnacle of all things *Final Fantasy*, no other RPG is so well-rounded.
2) Dragon Force (SS) — My favorite Saturn game, I LOVED *Dragon Force* — any game with 200-man battles scores points in my book.
3) Final Fantasy II (SNES) — The first *Final Fantasy* I played... just listen to the music and shed a collective tear because Square EA dropped this from *FF Anthology*.
4) Final Fantasy VII (PS) — RPGs never looked like THIS!
5) Chrono Trigger (SNES) — The non-*FF* Square RPG which I played to death on SNES... now we're just waiting for the sequel.
6) Phantasy Star 2 (SG) — Simple equation: Genesis + RPG = Phantasy Star 2
7) Final Fantasy Tactics (PS) — Epic story, battles, and music.
8) Star Ocean: The Second Story (PS) — One of the best RPGs in recent memory — engrossing, entertaining, and incredibly deep.
9) Panzer Saga (SS) — The Saturn's answer to *Final Fantasy VII*.
10) Shadowrun (SG) — The SNES version is supposed to be better, but this is what I played — great music, story, and... the matrix (long before the movie).

It's no surprise that half the games on my list are made by Square. So few other companies have been able to bring together the total package time and time again. Believe it or not, *Thousand Arms* is a shoe-in for the Top 10 RPGs of all time. But, since the U.S. version is still unfinished, I'll have to restrain my enthusiasm till it's released. Judging from the preview disc, though, *TA* has a lovable cast of characters, splendid graphics, original ideas, a wonderful sense of humor, and most importantly — personality.

Dango's Top 10 RPGs

1) Final Fantasy Tactics (PS) — It simply doesn't get any better than this. If there is anything wrong with this game, it's that it leaves you wanting more... much more.
2) Panzer Dragoon Saga (SS) — Awesome graphics, excellent story, and innovative gameplay, *PDS* is the best RPG on the Saturn, hands down.
3) Final Fantasy 3 (SNES) — One of the few RPGs that I've played more than twice. Great music, memorable characters, and an unforgettable story, everyone has to play this.
4) Tales of Phantasia (SNES, PS) — It's a real shame that few will know how good an RPG *Tales of Phantasia* is with its great battle system and cool character designs.
5) Dragon Force (SS) — One of the best-loved gems on the Saturn... and it's not hard to see why when you have awesome battle music, unique character classes, and 200 man bloodbaths.
6) Shining the Holy Ark (SS) — Yes, you never really see your character in the game. Yes, it's an old school dungeon RPG. And yes, I love this game.
7) Dark Savior (SS) — Five different stories, all interlacing together and some of the most difficult action sequences ever. But definitely one of the most satisfying gaming experiences.
8) Shining Force III (SS) — The third installment of the *Shining Force* series, it's just too bad we couldn't get all three CDs like those lucky gamers in Japan.
9) Phantasy Star 2 (SG) — All RPGs must pay homage to what I believe is the grand-daddy of all console RPGs with great music, groundbreaking features, and a unique setting.
10) Suikoden (PS) — Yeah, the story couldn't be more linear, but *Suikoden* has left me with some great RPG memories, with its great soundtrack and plethora of characters.

I don't consider myself an RPG connoisseur like Eggo, and I am very selective about what RPGs I'll experience. I'm not a *Final Fantasy* freak, nor do I keep reminiscing about past glory days of RPGs, mainly because I believe there are present day titles that simply outgun those great RPGs from the golden days of 8 and 16-bit. *Langrisser*, *Lunar 2* (which was number 11 for the record), and *Breath of Fire* were great back in the day, but they can't hold a candle to the likes of *Dragon Force*, *Final Fantasy Tactics*, and *Shining Force III*. Of course there will be timeless classics like *Phantasy Star 2* and *Final Fantasy 3* (*6* in Japan) which will probably stand the test of time. But I think RPGs will get better and better, as long as they remain games and not "interactive experiences."

El Niño's Top 10

1) Might & Magic II (SG) — An "American" RPG through and through. By far the longest and most in-depth RPG to ever hit the Genesis.
2) Final Fantasy Tactics (PS) — Square's best game, ever. Gorgeous *and* engrossing. I need a sequel!!
3) Shadowrun (SG) — One of the most original RPGs, it combined real-time fighting and role-playing perfectly.
4) Shining Force CD (Sega CD) — Great music, great story, and great gameplay. Made my Sega CD worth owning.
5) Ogre Battle (SNES) — This little gem from Enix was a masterpiece in RPG strategy games.
6) Phantasy Star 2 (Genesis) — Who needs *Final Fantasy* when you have *Phantasy Star*?
7) Dark Wizard (Sega CD) — Probably the most underrated RPG of its time. Excellent replay value.
8) Dungeon Explorer (Sega CD/TG-CD) —

Taking the idea of *Gauntlet* to the next level. An amazing experience.
9) Suikoden (PS) — Over a hundred characters and an epic battle mode made this very entertaining.
10) Buck Rogers (SG) — A great PC port of a great sci-fi adventure.

That's right, no *Final Fantasy* series... just the way it should be. I know most of you will take issue with my choices, but I think most of you have crummy taste in RPGs. The obsession with Japanese RPGs baffles me, considering how much better U.S. titles are (*Bard's Tale, Wasteland, Might & Magic* and a little license I like to call *AD&D*... need I go on?). It was actually a toss-up with my top three, but ECM made me rank 'em anyway. It's unfortunate that so few quality RPGs manage to make it to the console. The power of the Dreamcast and PlayStation 2 should hopefully change that (now if Japanese developers could just come up with an original idea, we may see something better than the standard hero/sidekick/little love-struck girl drivel that keeps coming out). Shidoshi is gonna kill me...

Cerberus' Top 10 RPGs

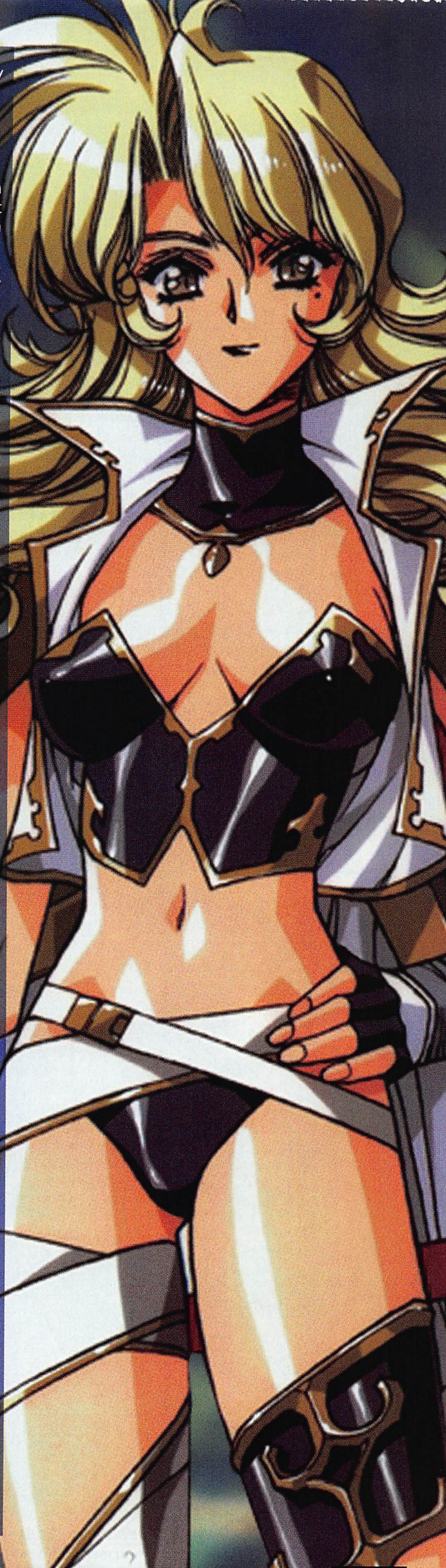
1) Y's I & II (TG-CD) — Amazing story and a beautiful musical score — simply timeless.
2) Final Fantasy II (SNES) — The one before the one that started it all. A must-play for fans of the series.
3) Phantasy Star (Master System) — One of my first real experiences with Role Playing Games. Beat the pants off anything at the time.
4) Phantasy Star II (SG) — A fitting sequel and an awesome game on its own.
5) Y's IV (PC-Engine Super CD) — Falcom's way of saying sorry for Y's III. Apology accepted.
6) Dragon Warrior (NES) — Another of my initial encounters with RPGs. It kept me going all the way to the end.
7) Star Ocean: The Second Story (PlayStation) — Just what I like, a sequel that destroys its predecessor. Buy this game.
8) Final Fantasy III (SNES) — I wasn't as involved in this story, but what a great game.
9) Final Fantasy Tactics (PlayStation) — Not your standard Square game, I still haven't been able to devote the right amount of time to this puppy.
10) Lunar: The Silver Star (Sega CD) — Shall we call this one an epic comedy? The story kept me going, but I think the pop culture references did, too.

Over the last decade, the amount of time I can dedicate to role-playing games has dwindled. This is a shame because it looks like there's some really cool stuff over the horizon. After class, sometimes before, some friends and I would get together to play RPGs. The more people we had working on the mazes and puzzles, the better; I can remember staying up until 3am with a few friends and finally defeating Dark Force in *Phantasy Star II* — hell, we leveled up our characters to 50. The day Sega does a *Phantasy Star* for the Dreamcast is the day my friends and I call in sick for a month.

ECM's Top 10 RPGs

1) Final Fantasy Tactics (PS) — an epic in every sense of the word, and the greatest RPG that Square has **ever** produced (even if they had to 'borrow' the Ogre team).
2) Grandia (SS) — a revelation on Saturn, and a game that took 18 months to finally make the journey to the PlayStation where's it's still a phenomenal game. It's also the **only** Japanese RPG I ever felt compelled to play **all** the way through.
3) Panzer Saga (SS) — if Sega ever had to prove that they're every bit as capable of designing utterly brilliant RPGs as arcade games, here's the pudding.
4) Final Fantasy 2 (SNES) — easily the best of the *FF* series (bah, to 3 and 7), with the most coherent story, and the Porom and Polom sequence that brought tears to gamers' eyes (and a big "thanks a lot, Square" for snubbing it in their upcoming *FF Anthology*, <grumble>).
5) Lunar: Eternal Blue (SegaCD) — Game Arts and Studio Alex prove that they can make an RPG to rank among the best Square has to offer with a reasonably solid translation by Working Designs.
6) Shining Force 2 (SG) — the finest game in the stunning *Shining* series of games (including *Shining the Holy Ark, Shining Wisdom, Shining in the Darkness*, et al).
7) Dark Savior (SS) — Climax's shining star, and yet another reason why Saturn was a superior RPG machine to PS up till its untimely demise.
8) Shadowrun (SNES) — the better rev of *SR* (by Data East), this version crushed the unwieldy Genesis rev by a mile with some truly spooky, edge-of-your-seat gameplay.
9) Dragon Force (SS) — if Sega knows one type of RPG, it's the strategy RPG. This Sega-developed, Working Designs-localized title is easily the finest translation done by the latter, with a very serious story and solid army-style battles.
10) Terranigma (SNES) — braving the harsh depths of the Atlantic ocean to score a copy of this UK-only port of Quintet's (*ActRaiser, Soul Blazer*, etc.) finest hour is more than worth the journey — now if only they'd have kept the streak alive with *Solo Crisis*, <sigh>.

While I've had a hard time getting into RPGs over the last couple of years due mainly to the rise of titles like *Final Fantasy VII* warping the RPG scene beyond recognition coupled with a blight of unbelievably generic, cookie-cutter RPGs, I'm probably the least rabid RPG fan in all of GameFan-dom. That, however, does not preclude me from realizing that there were some truly remarkable examples of the genre crafted in both 16 and 32-bit molds— examples that have led to sleepless weeks in the past. Now if only the DC can get its act together and give me some intense '128-bit' experiences, the genre could be revived in my jaded eyes...









The Final Countdown

How ironic is it that Hironobu Sakaguchi named his brainchild ***Final** Fantasy* back in 1987? Twelve years later, with eight incarnations of the series in Japan (and a rumored ninth in development), offshoot games like *Final Fantasy Tactics* and *Final Fantasy Legend* (on GameBoy... <ick>), and a *Final Fantasy* movie by Square Pictures in the works... there's nothing 'final' about it. In fact, the most popular and successful console RPG series in America is so 'non-final' that we're drowning in a deluge of *Final Fantasy* games this year. Not that that's a bad thing, Square, keep 'em coming... and about that sequel to *FF Tactics*...

So where was I? ...Oh yeah, *VIII*. That's the one with Squall and Rinoa, that bad-ass Seifer, and the witches Edea and Alty. Well, shortly (no offense, ECM) after E3, the first English playables of *FFVIII* were released to the ravenous media types, and now we're here to give you the full scoop. By the way, there are no changes (like new monsters or CG) to *FFVIII* from the Japanese version, other than the English text... so don't expect to see a *FFVIII International*.

I Love You, Man...

Agree with it or not, you'd better get used to it now. Love is the theme of *Final Fantasy VIII*. Yes, you heard me right, 'love' as in Hugh Grant kissing horse-mouthed Julia Roberts in the chick-flick *Notting Hill*. Now while *FF8's* theme may leave you reaching for a barf bag, it's all part of the master plan by Square to broaden the appeal of the game and attract a newer audience than the everyday sausage. Point is, the game's theme and setting are more modern and mature now... so get used to it! If you're looking for more of a traditional RPG, with knights and dragons and white mages and black mages... then you're not gonna find that here. Not to say there isn't magic in *FF8*, there's plenty of it, but the old-school characters and castles have died... along with the





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classic super-deformed look of prior *Final Fantasy* games.

FF8's story follows two main characters, Squall and Laguna, and their subsequent love interests. But just because this game has a love theme song (by famous Hong Kong singer Faye Wong), don't think that Square has lost their edge. There's still plenty of action and excitement in *VIII*. Once-mighty towns are demolished, powerful monsters are wielded as pawns, epic battles are fought, and bitter rivalries are fueled... It's just that the story goes lovey dubby at times... <ugh>.

Story Goes a Li'l Somethin' Like This...

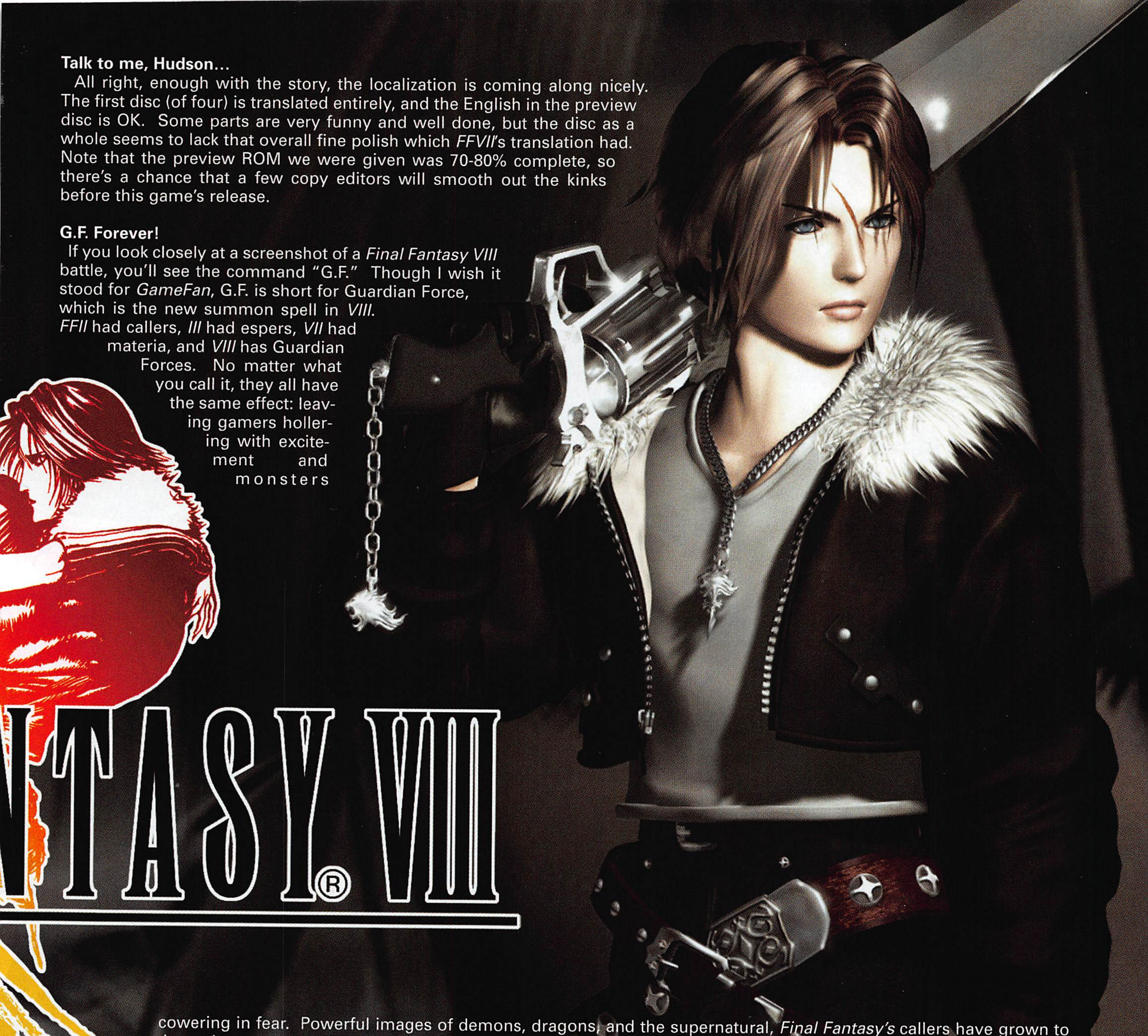
Since you're all hard-core gamers who play nothing but imports, you already know the game's story, so I don't need to go over it... On second thought, in case you have a little brother who's still learning kanji, I should probably cover it one more time...

The game starts off with the adventures of Squall, a student at the Balamb Garden military training school. He's your basic All-American boy who: develops a rivalry with fellow Garden student Seifer, falls in love with Rinoa, then watches as Rinoa pines away for Seifer. Course there's more to it than that, but you don't want to hear about governments, resistance fighters, witches, and tree-huggers, right? Well, maybe the witches are kinda interesting, but I'll let you discover them on your own.



But wait, there's more! From time to time in the game, Squall and friends fall to the ground clutching their heads in pain. And no, it's not because of the game's love song *Eyes on Me* (which is pretty good); rather, they keep having dreams of a mysterious Galbadian soldier named Laguna. Enter main character #2: A father and a soldier, Laguna's having second thoughts about life in the military and wants to be a journalist. What he has to do with Squall... you'll have to find out.

UPDATE EGGO: VIII is NOT ENOUGH.	Developer - Square	1 Player
	Publisher - Square/EA	Available Sept. 7th



Talk to me, Hudson...

All right, enough with the story, the localization is coming along nicely. The first disc (of four) is translated entirely, and the English in the preview disc is OK. Some parts are very funny and well done, but the disc as a whole seems to lack that overall fine polish which *FFVII*'s translation had. Note that the preview ROM we were given was 70-80% complete, so there's a chance that a few copy editors will smooth out the kinks before this game's release.

G.F. Forever!

If you look closely at a screenshot of a *Final Fantasy VIII* battle, you'll see the command "G.F." Though I wish it stood for *GameFan*, G.F. is short for Guardian Force, which is the new summon spell in *VIII*. *FFII* had callers, *III* had espers, *VII* had materia, and *VIII* has Guardian Forces. No matter what you call it, they all have the same effect: leaving gamers hollering with excitement and monsters cowering in fear. Powerful images of demons, dragons, and the supernatural, *Final Fantasy's* callers have grown to legendary status as 10 second snippets of 32-bit visual ecstasy... Plus, once you find a caller, you can summon it as many times as you want, provided it doesn't lose all its hit points and kick the bucket. "Ma, Ifrit's not movin' any more..."

Like the espers in *Final Fantasy VI*, the GFs in *VIII* have more of a role in the game than being just your ordinary summon spell. They also act as sub-characters of sorts, with their own: hit points, potions (specific to GFs), experience points (AP), and learned abilities. Like your normal characters, Guardian Forces earn experience points in battle, which go towards special abilities learned over time. Some of these are: increased hit points, refining magic from items, and revealing hidden draw points and save points. Many of the classic *Final Fantasy* battle commands are learned from GFs as well: Steal/Mug, Defend, and Coin (throw money away... just like Cerberus!).

Conjunction Junction, what's... your... function?

Junctioning is the latest and greatest play mechanic Square has devised for *VIII*. The equivalent of the materia system in *VII*, junctioning requires you to hookup Guardian Forces to your character in order to do anything. Without a GF junctioned, you only have one option in battle: fight. Once it's equipped, however, you're allowed to customize the remaining three battle commands: Magic, Draw, G.F. (summon), Card, Steal, Item, Mad Rush, etc.













Early on, you'll have to choose who's a magic user, who's the "fight" guy, and who's the item-wielding healer. Because there's nothing like the feeling of helplessness in battle with a magic user who can't use items... with "mute" cast on him. On the other hand, you don't want a bunch of wimps who can all heal, but can't dish out the punishment either.

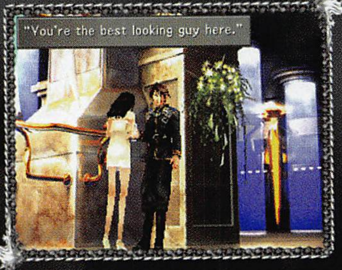
In addition to customizing your battle commands, junctioning also lets you link individual magic spells to character traits (such as hit points and strength). Also, you can bestow elemental properties (fire, ice, bio, etc.) to your attacks and defense.

"Have at you, Snake... DRAW!!"

Final Fantasy has had constant innovation with every game released. Be it espers, materia, Sabin's inputted Blitz techniques, limit breaks, etc., the game was the same, but there was always something different being added. Well, *FFVIII* is no different... there's a ton of new ideas in the game, but the most important is the magic system.

The magic system has been stagnant for quite a while, but now *FFVIII* introduces the completely new 'draw' system. Forget about magic points and ethers. Every spell is now like a scroll — a one-time use, then it's gone. This magic is 'drawn' from enemies in battle; but it takes a turn to draw. Unlike the demo of *FFVIII* (in which drawing was tedious), you now get 1-10+ uses of a spell from a single draw, so it isn't as time-consuming as you'd think.

If you're too scared to risk your neck in combat, there's also the quick and easy method of using draw points in town. Just pull up to one, like a gas pump, and draw for free... the only 'draw'back to this is the time needed for the point to replenish. You should also know that every monster has unique spells which you can draw; and some bosses even have Guardian Forces you can draw. Just don't overstay your welcome, or you'll be pushing up daisies with a broken Gunblade.

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Once spells are drawn, you can organize them in your menus later. Spread the magic out over all your characters... or stockpile them all into one central magic user. It's up to you.

Lastly, instead of just stocking magic from the draw command, you can also use a magic spell drawn from an enemy right away. Of course, you only get one use out of the spell, instead of 15, but if you're short of healing, there's nothing like drawin' Cures from that boss in front of you. Thanks!

What Do You Mean There's No Armor!?!

For the first time in *FF* history, there's no armor in the game! For that matter, there aren't really different weapons to equip either (no bronze sword, iron sword, mithril sword, etc.). Throughout the game, you always have the same weapon. **But**, you are able to upgrade it for more damage and a different look. With all the time you spend worrying about junctioning, not having to equip new armor and weapons is almost a relief.



Money Doesn't Grow on Trees, Silly... it comes from SeeDs.
While we're on the topic of Square shocking gamers, there's also no money earned from fighting in *FFVIII*. Gil is now doled out over time, dependant on your SeeD level. Once you graduate from Garden, you're given a SeeD level, which is based on your performance. The higher that SeeD level, the more money you're allotted come 'payday.' Play well later in the game and your SeeD level can rise, so don't fret about not making enough gil to survive. It's strange to be 'paid' regularly in a role-playing game; it's like having an allowance again. "Thanks, Daddy! ...Can I borrow the car tonight?"

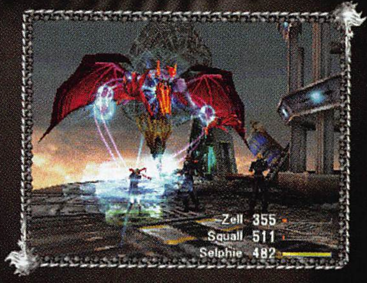
Takin' It to the Limit
Limit breaks — in *FFVII*, they were powerful normal attacks that came out when your character absorbed a lot of damage over the course of many battles. In *FFVIII*, they're much more accessible... if you're willing to live on the edge ("Feelin' lucky, punk?"). Now, they're more like a desperation attack reminiscent of *FFIII*; remember when one of those would come out and do 9999 points of damage at the last second? When your character's hit points dip dangerously low, there's a good chance your character will limit break. You can even do it every turn, as long as your character doesn't die or recover his HPs. Some of the limits are so spectacular-looking that they're almost mini summon spells. And, just like in *FFVII*, characters learn new limit breaks as the game progresses, so you're not stuck with the same attack all the time.

All Right, Already... So When Can I Play?
After reading 10 pages of me babbling about this game over two months, you're probably wondering when it'll finally arrive... When you can finally hold that precious jewel case in your grubby little mitts and squeal in glee... Square has just announced the exact street date, so you should be playing it by September. E













Final Fantasy VIII on PC!
Following the surprising success of *Final Fantasy VII* on the PC, Square has already announced *FFVIII* for the PC this year (4th Qtr). The juicy screenshots you're drooling over on this page are PC shots, in their 3D-accelerated glory. Anti-aliasing (no jaggies!), mip-mapping, and transparencies never looked so good! When this game's runnin' in high resolution on a monitor, it's a lot easier to appreciate the details and super clean graphics of this game. And hopefully, it won't need a million patches to run this time...











Evolution of a CHOCOBO



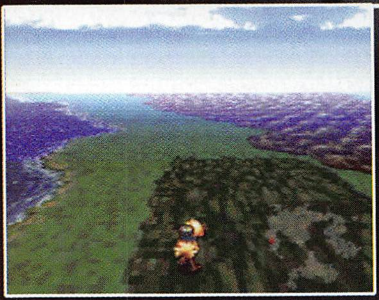
From humble beginnings as just a means of transportation, Chocobo has worked hard and proven that dreams do come true. Now the official mascot for one of the most influential 3rd party developers in Japan, Chocobo is the star of three games with his name on them and has an impressive resume of titles which he has been a part of. Rumored to be making a cameo appearance in *Legend of Mana*, Chocobo can no longer be typecast as just a Final Fantasy 'car.'



Final Fantasy IV
Nothing but a beast of burden in *FFIV*, Chocobo was stuck with the unpleasant job of ferrying the lovers Cecil and Rosa from city to city... But where are they now? Chocobo has obviously had the last laugh.



Final Fantasy V
There from the opening scene of *FFV*, Chocobo was becoming a star... no longer just a faceless extra... Chocobo was destined for greatness. Who would've thunk it?

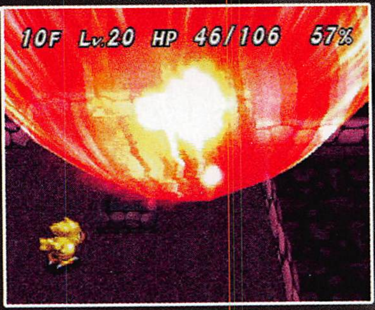


Final Fantasy VI
Disaster strikes! While the Japanese box featured Tina as the poster girl, the U.S. *FFIII* had Mog on the cover! Not only that, Moogles played a larger part than Chocobo in this game. "Kupo!" ...ARGH!!





Final Fantasy VII
Apparently the whole Moogle thing wasn't a hit in *FFVI*, because *FFVII* featured Chocobo breeding, racing, ranching, and a summon spell. This is when Chocobo's career really began to take off.



Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon
A million-seller in Japan, this game made Chocobo popular with the kiddies and even spawned a sequel.



Final Fantasy Tactics
A playable character for the first time in a *Final Fantasy* game, Chocobo made his debut in Tactics, along with a rainbow of other-colored Chocobos. Chocobo fever was starting to catch on...



Chocobo Racing
Incredibly cute and cuddly now, Chocobo should be able to pay off those plastic surgery bills with the revenue earned from *Chocobo Racing*, his third game.



Executive Producer •Hironobu Sakaguchi•

Recently, *GameFan* caught up with Hironobu Sakaguchi (popularly known as the creator of all things *Final Fantasy*) and asked him to answer these 10 questions.

GameFan: Is there any chance we'll see a sequel to *Final Fantasy Tactics*? Is the team that did that game still together?
Hironobu Sakaguchi: Presently, we have no plans, but simulation RPGs is a genre I like very much. So personally, I would like to pursue a sequel to *Tactics*.

GF: Square has done a lot with the Chocobo character recently. Any chance we'll see more of Tonberry or Cactrot (Saboten) in a game of their own? Like a Tonberry fighting game or a Cactrot shooter?
HS: A Cactrot shooter sounds interesting.

GF: Is Akira Toriyama doing the character designs for the next *Chrono Trigger* game?
HS: No, there are currently no plans for Toriyama to do the character designs.

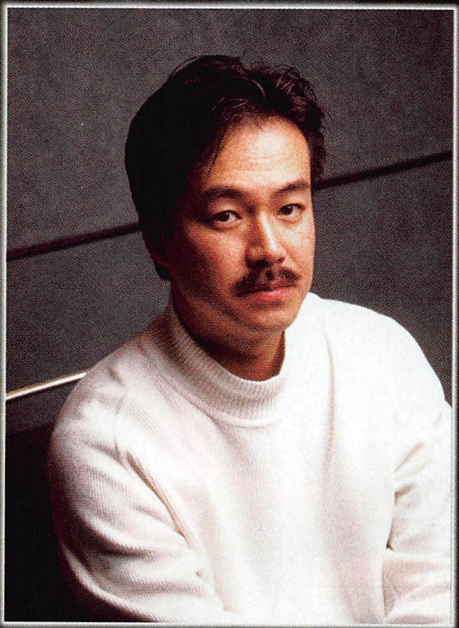
GF: Might we see a U.S. release of *Seiken Densetsu: Legend of Mana*? (hint hint)
HS: We have not specifically decided at what time *Legend of Mana* will be released, but we do have plans to release it.

GF: Now that Nintendo is abandoning the cartridge format with their new console, is there any chance you'd do a game on the next-gen Nintendo platform?
HS: Since detailed technical information has not yet been released regarding the next-generation platform for Nintendo, I cannot comment on this particular issue.

GF: So what's next for you after the U.S. *Final Fantasy VIII*, other than *Final Fantasy The Movie*?
HS: We are strengthening localization and porting for overseas as well as focusing on international sales. We plan to release *Saga Frontier 2* and many other titles in addition to *Final Fantasy VIII*.

GF: It is too cliched to ask, "What was your favorite *Final Fantasy* game in the series?" so... "Who was your favorite character in all the

GameFan Exclusive Interview



Final Fantasy games?" and please don't say, "It's too hard for me to pick just one."
HS: Gogo, an impersonator in *Final Fantasy VI* (*FFIII* on SNES).

GF: Do you play games in your free time? If so, what are your favorite games right now?
HS: *Gameboy Wars 2*.

GF: Will directing the *Final Fantasy* movie take up too much time for you to produce games or do you plan to do both?
HS: I go between Japan and Hawaii at least once a month. I produce games in Japan, whereas I focus on the movie while in Hawaii. For a lazy person such as myself, this cycle proves to be the most efficient way for me to work. I'm trying my best.

GF: With eight console games and a *Final Fantasy* movie, do you think you've done everything you've wanted to do with the Final Fantasy universe or do you still have ideas that have yet to be realized?
HS: It's just the beginning.

GameFan thanks Mr. Sakaguchi for taking the time out of his busy schedule (flying between countries, directing the *Final Fantasy* movie, producing *Final Fantasy VIII*, and cashing royalty checks) to answer these questions.

RPGs come and RPGs go. Most of them drop off the face of the earth only to be spoken of in harsh whispers and muted grunts by those of us that have far too much time on our hands to debate the merits of such things. For instance, two people arguing whether or not *Brain Lord* was a better RPG than *Paladin's Quest* (no really, this happened...I almost watched two people come to blows on that very subject — and I thought stuff like that was reserved for Usenet and IRC, <sigh>). However, there are, every now and again, those RPGs that are cut from a different cloth; whole cotton, instead of say, polyester. Games such as *Final Fantasy Tactics, Phantasy Star II*, and perhaps most importantly, Game Arts' *Grandia*. When it debuted on Sega Saturn way back in December of '97, the gaming community stood up and took notice (or at least the enthusiast gamer did). It was something different — something above and beyond what the game playing public had grown to expect — maybe even something they didn't really deserve...









Whereas most RPGs went out of their way to foist an overblown, intensely melodramatic storyline, littered with murder, betrayal, cross-dressing (<shudder>) and everything else that developers feel makes a game more 'adult,' Game Arts intentionally strove to cast *Grandia* as something different, something utterly and completely enthralling; something wonderful. It was for anyone and everyone, with plenty of overt and physical humor for a younger audience as well as a fully developed, grandiose storyline a veteran gamer could appreciate.

Sadly, not many took the time to experience it, with sales topping out at not even half a million units (especially disheartening for a game estimated to sell at least a million copies in the early going) and the game didn't reach the wide audience it could have, and more importantly, should have. Blame it on the death of the Saturn; blame it on gamer apathy... whatever the case, *Grandia*'s been given a second chance at life; resurrected, even, to see if it can do what it failed to do all those months ago — this time on a platform at the height of its power; a platform



P PREVIEW	ECM: Good things come to those wait...	Developer - Game Arts/ESP	1 Player
		Publisher - SCEA	Available 3rd Qtr.



swamped in utter mediocrity — a platform desperate for some form of salvation in this gamer's eyes...

Above all else, *Grandia* is a game filled with magic and wonder. Journeying with Justin and company across a world filled with genuine happiness and an almost carefree attitude can be a somewhat humbling experience the first time 'round. After all, aren't RPGs supposed to be mostly depressing affairs, with little, if anything to be happy about? Oh sure, we're generally out to save the world, big heroes that we are, but when was the last time an RPG made you smile out of sheer joy and happiness and not from poor translation or hackneyed jokes? I'd gather it's been some time for all of us...

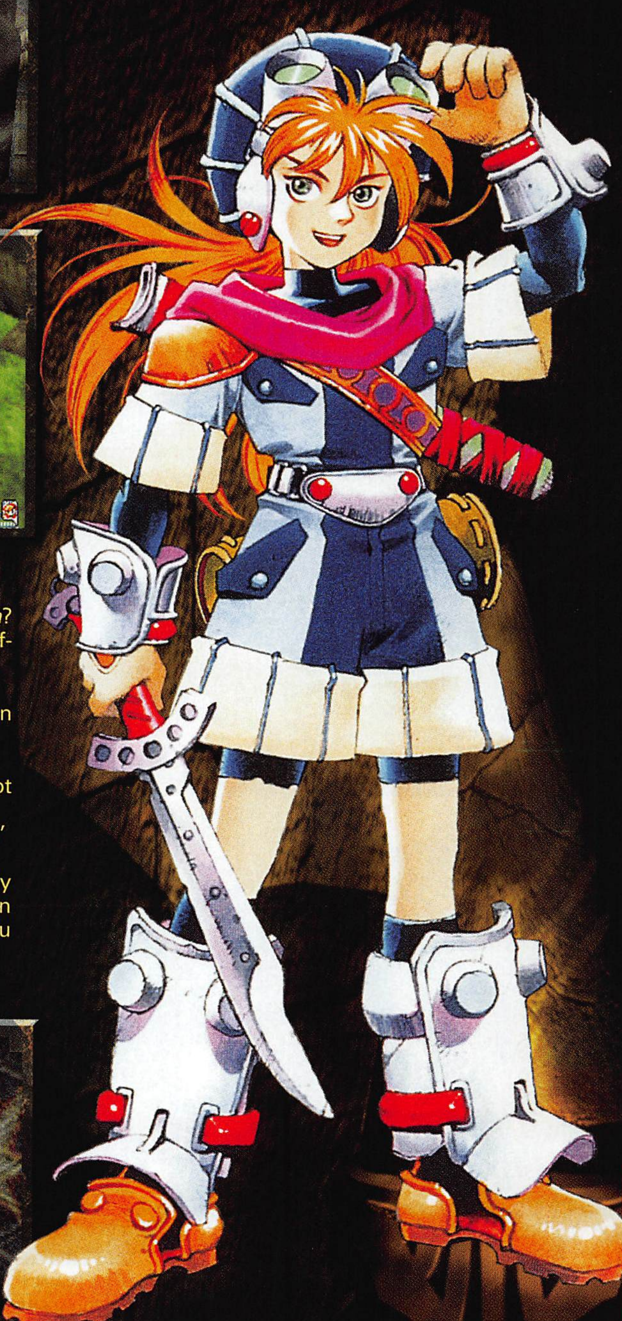
And while we're now nearing the end of this preview, with the thought, "What just happened?!" playing through your head, keep this in mind: something truly special, something you may not deserve is heading your way very soon. Here's to hoping you know it when you see it, because it's going to be quite a spell before we see it again... **ECM**











Saturn vs. PlayStation

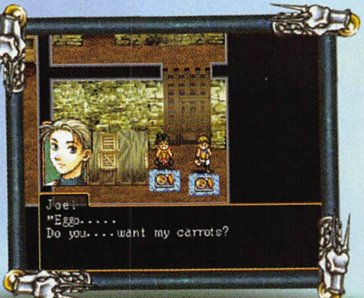
What's different between the Saturn and PlayStation versions of *Grandia*? Listed below for perusal at your leisure are some of the items that are different in the PS rendition of this remarkable RPG:

- PlayStation features higher frame rate, but lower res video than its Saturn counterpart.
- In-game graphics are lower-res, lower frame rate than the Saturn rev.
- Battle backgrounds are JPEG images (less colorful, very flat) and not polygonal as on Saturn.
- Voices are clearer in PlayStation version, but music sounds less 'grand.'

So yes, those of you that are still beating your friends over the head on a daily basis about how the Saturn was superior to the PlayStation can once again open old wounds, get out the salt, and rub it in vigorously (besides, now you can take a break from telling them why DC is better than PSY, right?).















Suikoden is a name which should bring back a flood of fond memories for PlayStation RPGers... especially the ones who trudged through *Beyond the Beyond*. Great music... 108 characters... building your castle... cruisin' around the world with Stallion... it's amazing how much you accomplished in that one day it took to beat the game (average completion time: 12-15 hours).

Well, years later, Konami is back with the sequel to the first 'good' PlayStation RPG, and thankfully the biggest gripe with the first game has already been addressed. Clocking in at an impressive 30+ hours of gameplay, *Suikoden II* should now be long enough to satisfy the critics. We recently got our hands on the E3 trial version of the game, and here's what we saw...

If any of you played the Japanese demo of *Suikoden II*, it's the same thing but translated to English. You and your friend Joei are in the army, and your unit is ambushed and betrayed by one of your own. Fleeing the ambush troops, you lose contact with Joei and are pulled from the river by Resistance forces who're playing for the wrong team. Now a prisoner in jail, you're treated surprisingly well by your captors — some guys by the names of Viktor and Flik (ring any bells? OK, I suppose not everyone played the original... they're characters from the first *Suikoden*).

After escaping from jail, you meet up with a group of gypsies, and your quickly-expanding party of five members journey up a mountain. At the peak, there's a foggy, mist monster boss (must be a leftover product from Konami's *Castlevania* on N64... <shiver>). Once you beat that boss (Die fog, die! Begone from my blessed PlayStation! Return to the wretched N64 from whence ye spawned!),











P PREVIEW	EGGO: EGGO JOINS PARTY!	DEVELOPER - KONAMI PUBLISHER - KONAMI	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE AUGUST











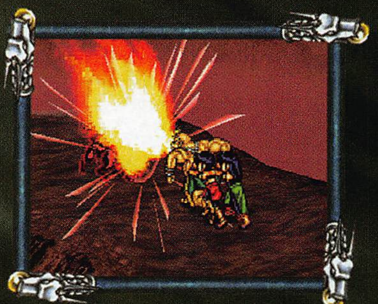
you get the ol' "Thanks for playing..." Doh!

So here's the lowdown on the one hour experience that was the *Suikoden II* demo: First, you'll notice that the graphics are better than the first; the characters, for instance, are more detailed. Second, there's a nifty run button for convenience. It's no Stallion, but it sure beats walking to the item store... everyday, barefoot, in the rain, uphill both ways... like when I was a kid in the *Suikoden* universe (sorry, I was temporarily possessed by the spirit of my father. Boy, it's late... look at the quality of the jokes just slide...). Finally, the music doesn't appear to be as good. Maybe because there's more going on in the sequel, there isn't as much room on the CD for music. Don't worry, the tunes aren't teeth-gnashingly bad, just a step down from the original.

OK, so maybe you can't tell a lot from playing an hour-long demo. Luckily, *GameFan's* had extensive time with the Japanese final, so we can tell you a little more than what the demo revealed. Spell effects are now done up nicely, with lighting effects galore, transparencies, and motion blurs. If you thought *Suikoden's* effects looked nice, just remember that was a first generation title, and now we're seeing fourth generation games; expect to be amazed... Some of the magic spells are so dramatic, they're comparable to *Final Fantasy VII*'s summons. Also, instead of building a castle, you now build up an entire town, which is about four times the size of the castle. Talk about larger scale... how's that for an ego trip? Eggoland, now opening.

So that's it for this preview. Stay tuned for the full review next month, when I can unleash the blazing fury of the real magic spells, not this early game stuff (hey I had to save something for the review). **E**















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Spring is here... skies are blue, birds are singing, and lens flares are shining... <music stops> err, actually it's summer and it's dreadfully hot right now. But you don't want to hear about me swimming in my clothes so... <music starts again> ...lens flares are shining, and Eggo's in love. No, not Julia "I have a vein the size of Nebraska in my forehead" Roberts love... but gamers' love: That woeful condition where an unwitting gamer is minding his own business, wading through the crop of 4th Qtr titles... and out of the blue Cupid pops up from the bushes and lets fly his unerring magical arrow which pierces that gamer through the heart and destines him to fall in love with the next game he sees... That game is *Thousand Arms.*

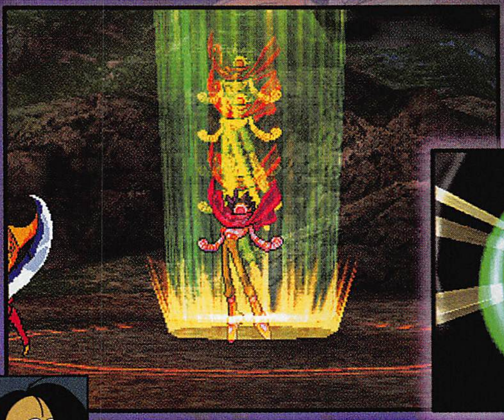
There's a lot to like about Atlus' 3rd quarter title: nice graphics, PC Engine-like anime scenes, an involving story, loads of personality, a great sense of humor... and women! OK, I'll admit at first I was wary of the whole RPG/dating sim thing, but after seeing it in action, Red pulled it off surprisingly well.

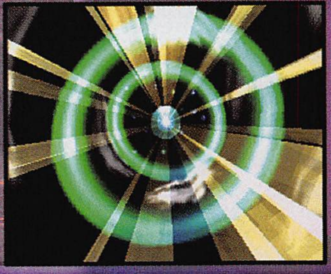
The story is simple enough: You're Meis Triumph, son of the lecherous feudal lord of the town of Kant. Growing up a womanizing ruler like your father, your days are spent flirting with the ladies and doing what princes do — a whole lot of nothing (hey, that's... kinda like Kid Fan). But all's not well in happy land, because the Dark Acolytes come to town, kickin' ass and chewin' bubblegum. Forced to flee Kant, you begin apprenticeship as a spirit blacksmith.

And boy do the ladies love those spirit blacksmiths. In fact, you'll need many women in order to forge strong weapons; there's a weird "couple bonding" thing requiring two people to forge spirit weapons. So not only is flirting encouraged in this game, it's a necessity! As the story progresses, you're given choices in conversations, allowing you to steer the topic as you please.

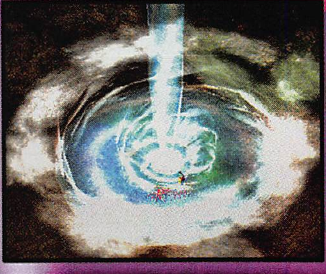
The textual translation is excellent. Words can't describe how great a job Atlus has done with the localization thus far. Sentences aren't translated verbatim, and the humor's not lost somewhere in between. Rather, the localization team has had fun with their job and spiced up the dialogue with appropriately witty banter. For example, you've got a girl saying things like, "Have you seen my dad's resurrection? My mom says she'll leave him if he doesn't get one." This game constantly had me rolling on the floor laughing... and Dangohead too, whenever he walked by. Not just the translation, but the story itself is hilarious and tongue-in-cheek. I've never laughed so hard playing a game as I did with *Thousand Arms.*







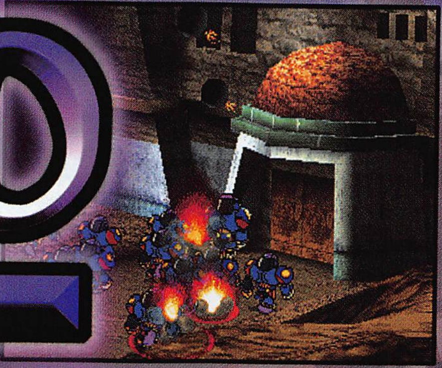






PREVIEW	EGGO: DEATH TO THE LECHEROUS NOBLEMEN! ...OH WAIT, THAT'S ME.	DEVELOPER - RED PUBLISHER - ATLUS	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE 3RD QTR.

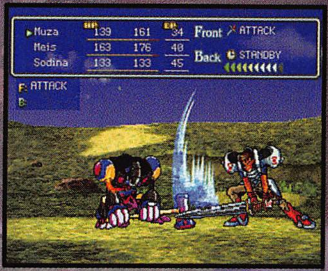
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Which brings me to the reason why I'm smitten with this game... personality — one of those intangibles which so few games have, but when you find one with it, you hold on to it till your dying days. *Dragon Force* had personality... *Earthworm Jim* had personality... and now *Thousand Arms* has personality. Whatever you call it — personality, soul, charisma — *TA* has it, and you have to experience it to truly understand.

Visually, the game doesn't disappoint either. Sprites walking on swirling 3D backgrounds a la *Xenogears* and *Grandia*. The textures are great and... Zzz... I don't want to bore you with the details; just know that the engine is nice, there's 2D elements, and it's all well-done. As expected, the music is also good, albeit super happy and fruity like the rest of the game.

But, there's one thing which makes me pause... and that's the dub. The preview copy we have features **only** Japanese dialogue and English text, and I love it! But the final will be completely different, with English voiceovers and text. The dub's the last piece of the puzzle, which will determine whether this is a good game... or a great game. Please Atlus, don't screw this part up. Or do something to give gamers the option of a subtitled or dubbed purchase.





Almost every race has a dark horse, and in the competition for RPG of the year, *Thousand Arms* is the big sleeper. While stallions like *FFVIII* hit the ground running, backed by a mountain of hype and throngs of supporters, *Thousand Arms* will probably burst out of the gates with a desperate whinny and a dull thud. But just because Atlus' game doesn't have legions of fans right now, doesn't mean it shouldn't (or won't). Do your part. Next time you're in a game store having a sausage discussion with the clerk behind the counter, bring up the subject of *Thousand Arms*, and don't stop asking about it. You know I won't. **E**

COMING SOON

COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON

Here's a special RPG edition of Coming Soon. Unless otherwise noted, the following games are import titles only, and have not been announced for U.S. release. But they give you a glimpse of what might come our way further down the line.




Detonator Gauntlet (Working Designs) — Working Designs' next project is a strategy RPG with mechs. Polygonal battles, multiple endings, and 80 missions. Look for it this fall in the U.S.

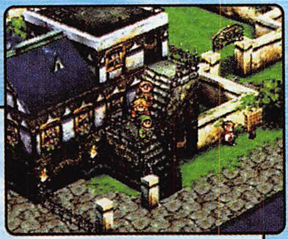




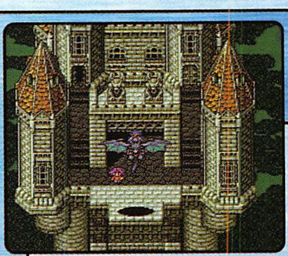
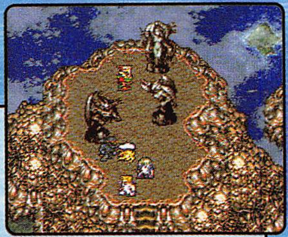


Dew Prism (Square) — Here's an action RPG from the creators of *Xenogears*, *Chrono Trigger*, and *Seiken Densetsu*. There'll be a demo of this game packaged with *Seiken Densetsu: Legend of Mana* on July 15.





Dragon Quest VII (Enix) — This has been #1 on Japanese Most Wanted lists for some time. The release date has slipped over and over (now at Nov 26th '99), but it certainly looks worth the wait. You can bet Sony will bring this over, though you probably know the series as *Dragon Warrior*.

Final Fantasy Anthology (Square EA) — *Final Fantasy V* is finally coming to the U.S., along with *FFVI* (released as *FFII* here on SNES), a special music CD, super-handy run button, and new CG movies. Domestic release Winter '99.




Koudelka (Sacnoth) — Developed by former employees of Square, *Koudelka* looks promising in its early stages. Set in the 1800's, this horror RPG follows three characters who explore a spooky monastery.



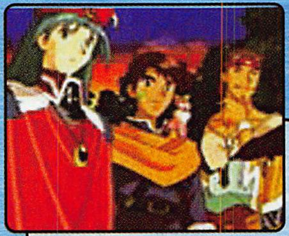


Legend of Mana (Square EA) — In the interview this issue, Hironobu Sakaguchi conceded that this game will come to the U.S. eventually, though it's not going to be until next year at the earliest. We'll be talking about this one for a while.





London Spirits Detective (Bandai) — As an assistant to a detective in London in the 19th century, you talk to spirits, solve mysteries, and summon demons.




Lunar 2: Eternal Blue (Working Designs) — Did you like the PlayStation version of *Lunar*, complete with cloth map, soundtrack, "Making of" CD, can opener, etc.? Well, the sequel is on its way, and it's scheduled for winter of this year in the States.




Persona 2: Innocent Sin (Atlus) — Hey Persona! The sequel to Atlus' early PS RPG arrives in July. Look for import coverage next issue.

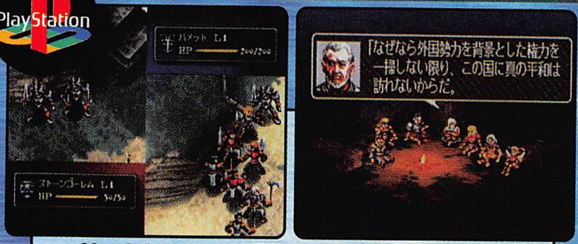




Saga Frontier 2 (Square EA) — Originally thought to be a '99 title, Square EA has since pushed the domestic release date off until early 2000. A beautiful 2D game which is better than the first (yippee!).

RPG SPECIAL

COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON



Vandal Hearts 2: The Gate Above the Sky (Konami) — This strategy RPG should be out in Japan by the time you read this. Expect enhanced graphics and maps double the size of the original.



Wild Arms: Second Ignition (Sony) — The sequel to Sony's successful *Wild Arms* is coming. The new action system lets you negotiate jumps, move boxes, and pick up items. In addition to that, there are now multiple story paths to follow. You can also expect fully polygonal, rotatable 3D environments like *Xenogears*.

COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON



Harvest Moon (Natsume) — A farm sim/RPG, *Harvest Moon 64* offers a lot: new animals, vegetables, dog racing, horse racing, a part-time job system, dirty overalls, and five potential wives! Roll up your sleeves when it comes to the U.S. 3rd Qtr.

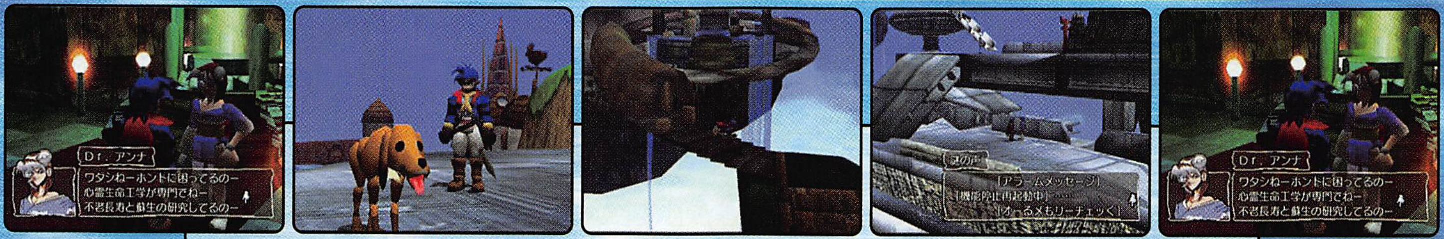


Ogre Battle 3 (Nintendo) — The only strategy RPG you need to know about on N64. Should be out in Japan by the time you read this.

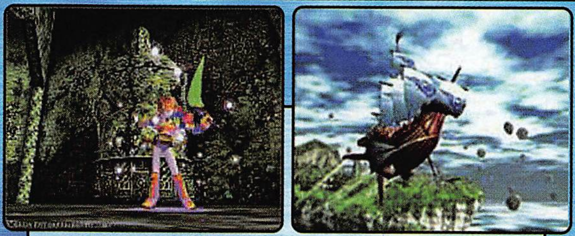
COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON



Baldur's Gate (Sega) — The first U.S. Dreamcast RPG is the much talked-about *Baldur's Gate.* Just think... Dungeons & Dragons... and a modem to play with other sausages. Are you scared?



Climax Landers (Climax) — Coming to Japan July 29th, this is one of the best-looking DC RPGs yet... from the makers of *Landstalker*.



Project Ares (Sega) — From the creators of *Phantasy Star, Project Ares* is the codename for this DC RPG, which is still early in development. Could this be the much sought after Dreamcast *Phantasy Star* game?



Langrisser Millenium (Masaya) — This 3D strategy RPG continues the *Langrisser* line and should be available in Japan spring of 2000.

There are also many RPGs we're looking forward to, but which are still too early for screen-shots. Some of these are: *Parasite Eve 2, Vagrant Story* (from the creators of *Ogre Battle* and *FF Tactics*), *Chrono Trigger 2, Mother 3* (*Earthbound* in the US), and *Jade Cocoon 2*, to name a few.

I'll do my best to refrain from making any bad jokes about *Good Times*; so work with me, as it's not going to be easy. *Dino Crisis* is the latest effort by Shinji Mikami, the mastermind behind the wildly popular *Resident Evil* series. Running on a modified *Resident Evil* engine, this adventure takes place on Ibis Island.

Now you're probably wondering what separates *Dino Crisis* from its predecessors. How much of a difference can overgrown lizards make? Well, I'd have to say a whole lot, because the tension factor is 10x more intense than *RE*. Newfangled enemies and story aren't the only reasons why either; polygonal backgrounds give the game a much more polished look, and the gameplay is lightning fast.

You're probably wondering about the story... In a nutshell, a four-member special tactics team has been assigned to locate Dr. Kirk, the young super genius behind the "Principle of Clean Energy."





Early on the in the mission, things go awry, and Gale, Rick, and Regina have no way of escaping. The fourth member of the team, Cooper, has the only means of communication, and you find out very quickly that he's indisposed. As Regina, you'll need to explore the massive island and locate Dr. Kirk, as well as find out why Ibis Island has been overrun by a species from another era... and you're only armed with a 9mm to begin with.

Though the story may not be as compelling as watching the Umbrella conspiracy unfold, the cool environments and scary surprises will be enough to keep you playing. Nothing beats walking down an isolated hallway and having a velociraptor leap out of the shadows. Sure, it's shades of *Jurassic Park*, but I'm not complaining.

Real-time polygonal backgrounds enhance the appeal of this game beyond that of *Resident Evil*. From a visual standpoint, it's a sharp

DINO CRISIS

looking game, with some similarities to *Metal Gear Solid*. Single-skinned dinos have a disturbingly realistic appearance. And since the models are single-skinned, you won't see any seams breaking.

Add dynamic lighting for yet another plus. Whereas the *RE* series didn't have any lighting effects, *Dino Crisis* really pulls out all the stops. Walk past a light source and watch the engine light Regina accordingly. Even the Raptors and their buddies are affected by surrounding lights.

Various camera angles further that feeling of apprehension.







From the bird's-eye to the scary chase or fixed cams, you won't be disappointed. The stylistic camera placement gives the game a movie-like feel; it's a shame there is no widescreen option available. The *Metal Gear* influence is present in cut-scenes as well. Instead of transitioning from in-game graphics to computer graphics, Shinji-san opted to further most of the story with in-game graphics. Some segments are expanded through the use of computer graphics, but for the most part, it's smooth in-game transitions.

You won't be reaching for ear-plugs during intermissions anymore; the acting, while nothing to rave about, is significantly better than *RE* and *RE2*. Not too much over-acting or line-reading is evident in any part of the spoken script. Plug *Dino Crisis* in a set of quality headphones or piped through a phat stereo to fully realize the crystal clear audio. Ominous and foreboding, the soundtrack gets the hairs on the back of your neck to point straight up. It truly sets the mood, and there's not a moment when you're not ready for the worst. Capcom Sound Team's musical talents shine through in the orchestrated

CERBERUS: So it's *Jurassic Park*... it rocks nonetheless	Developer - Capcom Publisher - Capcom	1 Player Available September

soundtrack and studio quality sound effects. You'll know what I mean when you hear the sound of a Raptor's razor-sharp talons tapping against the cold steel floor. In general, the audio is on par with the visuals and gameplay; and take my word for it, this is a very good thing.



The first time an irritable Raptor knocks away your sidearm, you'll know that this isn't Raccoon City. Running away from zombies was easy, but running from an agile reptile is useless. A couple of clean shots will take out almost any dinosaur. If you're not into harming the little buggers, you can always use tranquilizer darts; but the effect is only temporary, mind you.

To balance out the speed and ferocity of the lizards, Regina can walk with her weapon at the ready as well as perform a quick 180º about-face maneuver. Although not as prevalent as I'd like, ammunition isn't as rare as before; and dinos go down much faster than zombies. This makes your job more enjoyable and less frustrating. Thank you, Capcom. The puzzles are another element that has been improved. Less time wasted on puzzles means more time to explore and exterminate.

Throughout this preview, I've compared *Dino Crisis* to *Resident Evil* and *Resident Evil 2*. This is for a reason; almost everyone interested in *Dino Crisis* is already a fan of *RE*. With this said, those among us who have followed the *RE* series want to know what makes *Dino Crisis* stand out from its elder brothers. If this preview hasn't sold you on *Dino Crisis*, then it's doubtful the review will. From what I've seen, the design team has outdone itself; *DC* is better than *RE* in every way. Watch these pages closely; next month we'll have a full-blown review. We might throw in a li'l hocus pocus, too. **C**



Ominous and foreboding, the soundtrack gets the hairs on the back of your neck to point straight up.





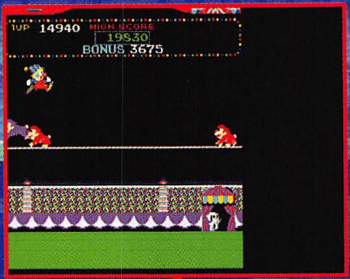




When I was ECM's height, my family and I would have dinner at Shakey's Pizza or a burger joint near our house. This was a Sunday habit that lasted early into high school. Being the young tike that I was, I'd get very impatient waiting for our food. The second time we headed over to the burger place, I asked my dad for a quarter to wile away the time. That first quarter my father handed me to play *Donkey Kong* affected the rest of my life... I was totally hooked. Sure, I had seen my brother play everything from *Pong* to *Asteroids* and more, but nothing beats playing them yourself. From then on I'd always beg my parents to spot me some quarters to test out the latest games. I was even more excited about playing my favorite games than eating dinner.



I was strictly an arcade aficionado until my sister bought me an Atari 7800 — just prior to the release of the venerable NES. I'd play the occasional console game at a friend's house, but arcades were my life; *Yie Ar Kung Fu, Rampage, Road Runner, Paperboy* — I played them all. Before, the NES home games couldn't match the graphical quality of arcade games. Now, it seems like arcade games don't stack up to console or PC games.



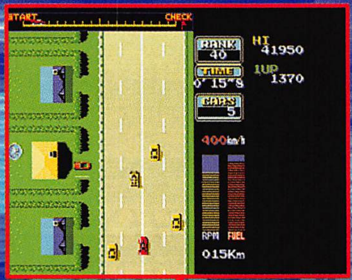
But all those games I played from 1980-1988 still hold a special place in my heart. The sense of enjoyment I got from old arcade games is hard to replicate with the games of today. I'm a big fan of any classics compilations and *Konami's Arcade Classics* is another title to add to my retro-games library. There's a whole lot going on in this compilation. In chronological order, we've got *Scramble, Super Cobra, Pooyan, Time Pilot, Roc'N Rope, Gyruss, Circus Charlie, Road Fighter, Yie Ar Kung Fu,* and *Shaolin's Road.* That's a total of 10 games. These aren't just run-of-the-mill either; each one made a lasting impression on anyone that played them.

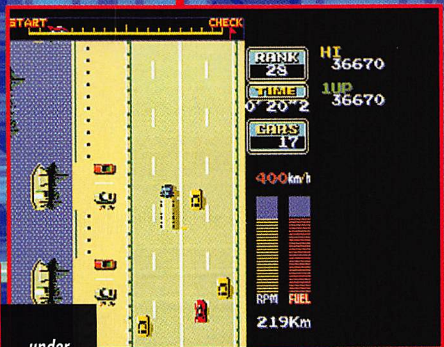


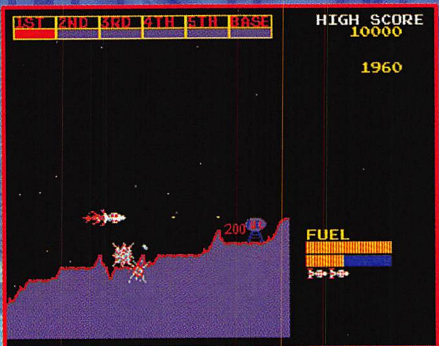


KON

ARCADE









under construction

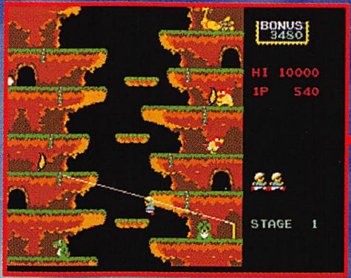
R REVIEW	CERBERUS: It's like an old school arcade in your PlayStation!	Developer - Konami / Publisher - Konami	1-2 Players / Available Sept.	Viewpoint Score :80

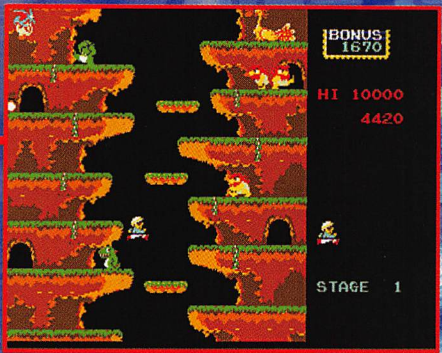




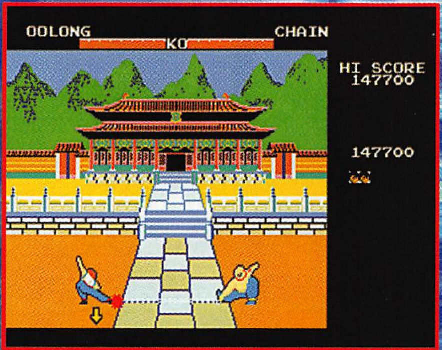


Here's a short rundown, in case you didn't play these great games. *Scramble* and *Super Cobra* are almost one and the same shooter. Some slight graphical differences separate the two, but when you play them, you'll see. Both games require that fuel cells be collected as you scroll horizontally left to right. *Gradius*, I'm sure, was inspired by *Scramble*. *Pooyan* is an interesting one — using meat and arrows as weapons, you must stop wolves from getting to your little pigs. Sets of Lupus will use balloons to fly up and down trying to sneak past you to steal your piggy kids. *Time Pilot* is a free roaming shooter, maybe the first of its kind. *Thunder Force II* had a lot of similarities. You assume the role of a climber on a quest in *Roc'N Rope*. With only a flashlight and rope in hand, you climb from platform to platform avoiding enemies and grabbing bonus items. You can blind enemies temporarily with your flashlight, but you're harmless otherwise. *Gyruss* is a combination of *Tempest* and *Galaga* with *Toccata and Fugue* as background music. *Circus Charlie* is a simplistic platform game with six different circus-themed events, each one becoming more difficult than the last. *Road Fighter* is *Spy Hunter* without weapons and Peter Gunn music.





AMI CLASSICS

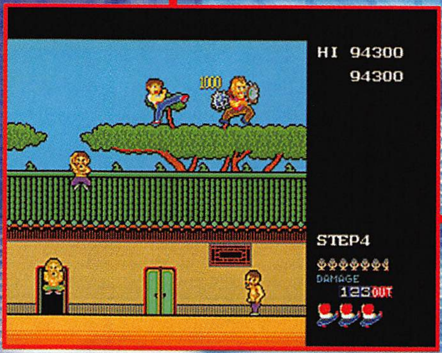


Yie Ar Kung Fu was one of the first fighting games, and it's still fun today. With two buttons and an eight-way joystick, the lead character could perform up to 16 different attacks that he could use to defeat all 11 opponents. *Shaolin's Road* looks like a simplistic sequel to *Yie Ar Kung Fu*. Instead of a complicated attack system, *Shaolin's Road* concentrated on no-holds-barred battles. Each stage consisted of a pre-boss stage and a boss encounter.





I can't say that I'm as impressed as I was when I first saw these games. Graphically, they're way behind the times. Sadly, if you've never played any of these games or are new to video games, you won't appreciate any of Konami's arcade classics. But to my friends and me, these are worth more than their weight in gold. I remember sharing info on how to maximize score in *Yie Ar Kung Fu* and *Gyruss*. As with other classic game compilations, it really depends on if you played the games. It's all about nostalgia, and Konami '80s AC Special is chock full of it. I can't wait to see follow ups with *Rush 'N Attack*, *Gradius*, *Goonies*, *Stinger*, and *Haunted Castle*. **C**





Cerberus has been spotted in the late hours of the night on multiple instances at Pac-Man Arcade in Pasadena, California — an arcade full of retro-gaming glee.

JADE COCOON

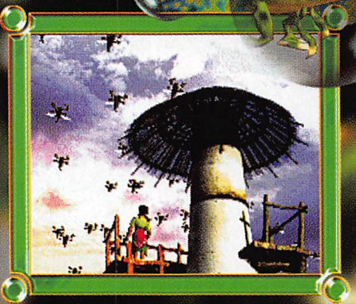
STORY OF THE TAMAMAYU













Months back, we previewed *Jade Cocoon*, and now it's final time for the game formerly known as *Tamamayu Monogatari* (yeesh, talk about a mouthful). In case you missed our original preview, here's a quick recap: *Jade Cocoon* — the import RPG title which Crave acquired for good reason. The game's gorgeous, pre-rendered backgrounds rival that of *Final Fantasy VIII*, while *JC*'s polygonal characters even surpass those of *FFVIII*. That's where the comparison ends, however, because *Jade Cocoon* doesn't play like *FFVIII*.

In fact, the game plays a lot more like *Azure Dreams*. For those not up on their Konami RPGs, it was a 'dungeon game' where you brought along a familiar (monster buddy) in exploration of a 99-level dungeon. Every time you left that dark place to return to town, you'd have to re-enter at level one and work your way up again (apparently, this was before the advent of elevators). The thing that kept you motivated in this relentless up and down battle was that your familiar would constantly level up with every trip, till he grew into a hulking brute of a pet dragon.

Well, *Jade Cocoon* builds upon that reliance of monster allies to do the dirty work. As the village's Cocoon Master (actually a prestigious title, contrary to preconceived notions that Cocoon Masters aren't among society's elite), it's your job to save your fellow town-members by venturing into monster-infested forests to find the rare Calabas herb. Following a heinous attack by the Locusts of the Apocalypse (think *Exorcist 2* meets The Four Horsemen), much of the town's populace has fallen into a Sleeping Beauty-like slumber. Only the Calabas herb can revive the village sleepyheads, and only YOU can find it.

Luckily, you don't work alone. Using those legendary Cocoon Master skills and a Link-like ocarina, you can capture and domesticate all the monsters you come across with a brief song and dance. When you return to the village, your early-teens Nagi wife preps the monsters for further breeding, sale, or slavery (working as a familiar). The





R REVIEW	EGGO: WHO'S THE (COCOON) MASTER, LEROY?	DEVELOPER - GENKI	1 PLAYER	VIEWPOINT SCORE :85
		PUBLISHER - CRAVE	AVAILABLE AUG 1	









monster breeding is similar to *Monster Rancher*, combining creatures from your stable in an effort to diversify the gene pool and make a lot of monsters happy. You're a lot like a mad scientist, trying to genetically create the ultimate, superhuman monster to bring into battle.

Most of the fighting takes place in one-on-one turn-based skirmishes. While you can only have one member of your team onscreen at a time, Levant can jam on the ocarina any time to summon one of three familiars into battle. Rotating the monsters like pitchers in a baseball season, you give them time to rest and recover their mana and hit points. Every familiar also learns skills and magic spells, in addition to having a base in the four elements (earth, wind, fire, and water). You'll have to pay attention to the enemy's elements too, because you don't want to bring a fire creature into battle against a water monster.

Building further on the *Monster Rancher* aspect, *Jade Cocoon* also has a tournament mode in which you can battle it out claw-a-mano with a friend's monsters in a one-on-one arena setting. This just adds incentive for you to become a master breeder as well as a Cocoon Master.

As for localization, the translation isn't bad. Nearly every conversation you have is accompanied by actual dialogue; so it's a good thing Crave's voice actors are, for the most part, tolerable. The text is adequate, and that's a good thing, because it would be a shame for the script not to measure up to the rest of the game's high production values.

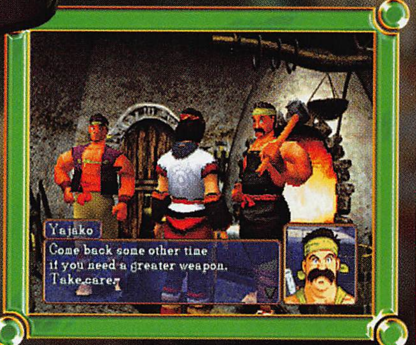
Still, there are a few things which prevent me from giving this game a whole-hearted recommendation. First, some of the voices are grating (e.g., I found myself wincing when Mahbu initially spoke). I suppose it depends on your dubbing tolerance; I'm one of those people who prefers anime to be subbed instead of dubbed. Compared to the Japanese voices in *Tamamayu Monogatari*, the American vocals just don't hold their own. But if you can stomach most English dubs, then you'll like *Jade Cocoon*.

Secondly, the 'dungeon game'-style gameplay is a bit tedious and time consuming. If you have lots of time to spend on this game, you can really get into the monster-ranching and leveling up of your creatures. But... in what is fast becoming the year of the RPG (*Final Fantasy VIII*, *Suikoden 2*, *Thousand Arms*, and *Star Ocean 2* to name a few), *Jade Cocoon* will have some stiff competition. Granted, it does have unique gameplay which stands out from the rest of the pack, but I think most gamers would be better suited picking up *Star Ocean 2* right now... it's more of a classic RPG, and it's a time-eater as well. E

Eggo enjoys reading, candlelight dinners, and monster breeding in his spare time.





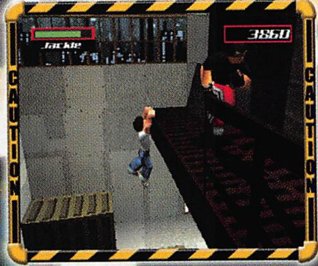


Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster

















Coming back from E3, I couldn't wait for Tecmo's update of *Ninja Gaiden* on the PSY. Needing a quick beat-'em-up fix, I turned to ol' faithful: *Streets of Rage 2* on the Genesis. Ahh, crackin' skulls with the lead pipe in *SoR2* made me forget the woeful state of the U.S. PlayStation beat-'em-up scene... (*Fighting Force*? Kill me!). Which is why, when Midway came by our office with *Jackie Chan: Stuntmaster*, I was pleasantly surprised.

I don't remember much about it after playing this game at E3 in '98 because, quite frankly, back then the game wasn't very memorable (kinda like that Jackie Chan fighting game in the arcades... can you say, "Kill me!" again?). But what we saw of *JCS* at E3 this year looked like a completely different game... albeit still very early. What Midway had was a five minute looping demo of a single level of the game.

With gameplay similar to *Ninja Gaiden*, this game had ECM and I beating each other up for the controller. Course, I deferred the d-pad to the 'higher-up dwarf' (ECM's Note: carefully avoiding the fact that Eggo is shorter than I am...can you say 'Mini Me'?) on condition that I got to write this preview... All those features which beat-'em-up fans would hope for are here: long combos of punches and kicks, different throws, weapons to pick up, baddies galore, multi-level stages, breaking posts, and that patented backflip-off-the-wall move which is utterly useless, but scores high style points (I'd call it a "money-maker" move if this were an arcade game, since it's guaranteed to kill you the more you try it).

There's a feeble story here about a rival filmmaker trying to murder Jackie on the set of his newest movie, so he sends a legion of inept goons to take out Hong Kong's hottest action star. Apparently, Jackie's troupe of bodyguards are busy playing a heated game of mahjong, so it's up to you (as Jackie) to take out the trash yourself...

Fortunately, Midway has the right idea and motion captured Jackie and all his acrobatic moves. So fans will be pleased to see his miniature likeness pulling off familiar moves.

There's just one thing that's unsettling about this game... there'll be times when Jackie has a weapon and the enemies don't. Having viewed countless HK movies, I'm used to Jackie being the unarmed one, taking on pipe-wielding, bat-swinging, gun-drawing bad guys. So clubbing unarmed villains over the head with a large fish is kinda disturbing to me, but it's not a flaw in the game design...

Combining classic beat-'em-up gameplay with a character who's got a lot of character, this could be a surprising hit for Midway. Let's hope that they do it up right, because the game's shaping up nicely. E







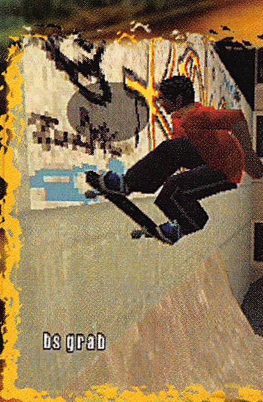




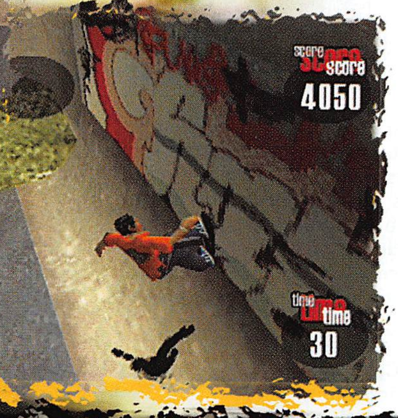
P PREVIEW

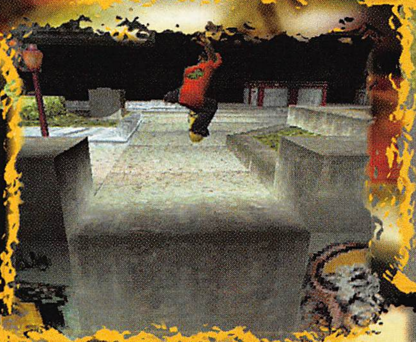
EGGO: THERE BETTER BE A LADDER-SWINGING SCENE...

DEVELOPER - RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT	1 PLAYER
PUBLISHER - MIDWAY	AVAILABLE 4TH QTR.



bs grab

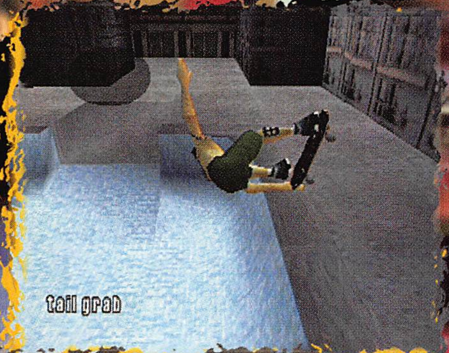




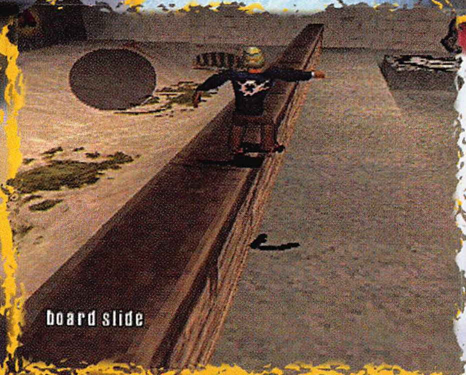
As video games become more accepted by society, games with mass appeal will become more frequent. Snowboarding proves this theory; between arcades and consoles there are over a dozen snowboarding games to date. The PlayStation has had its share of deck trek games, from *X-Games* to the most recent, EA's *Street Skater*. And now, as the saying goes, it's the calm before the storm... Two big-name games are set to come out around the same time — *Tony Hawk Skateboarding* and *Thrasher*. Each game has a huge license behind it and its own unique selling point. They won't be the last of their kind either — their success will determine how many copy-cats we see in the next year.

Thrasher differs greatly from its rival, *Tony Hawk*. First and foremost, *Thrasher* is strictly a one-player excursion. Rockstar has decided to go for a more 'realistic' approach to the skating scene. Choose one of Rockstar's no-name characters and begin your career as a local, learning the ins and outs of skating. Once you've proven your skill, you can move onto regional, national, and international skating ranks. As your skills improve, various skating companies will offer to sponsor you. Before you know it, you'll have your choice of decks, shoes, and skating gear. Of course, you can turn down offers and switch sponsors in mid-career as well. Having to decide between Reef and Etnies can be a tough thing for a budding professional skater, and those are just your shoes...

THRASHER



tail grab



board slide

Tricks won't come easy; the more experience you gain, the wilder the tricks you can perform. Once you get the hang of performing an Ollie, you can move onto stuff like Kick Flips, 180s, and grinds. Jamie King, Producer of *Thrasher*, tells us that we can expect over 100 different tricks. Mastering and remembering all the tricks is just the beginning. Combining multiple tricks in one run will increase points earned. An Ollie ending in a 180 won't cut it; you're going to have to do better than that if you want to make it to New York or Tokyo to skate with the masters of air.

The basic premise behind *Thrasher* is to maximize your points and tricks before the police show up to bust you. Numerous parks that you'll visit have rails, pools, platforms, half-pipes, stairs, and everything else skaters love and love-to-hate.

There is no 2-player simultaneous play, but games like BARNEY (skater's equivalent of HORSE), and such will let the competitive spirit of skating shine through. As fun as it was, EA's *Street Skater* has made me skeptical of games in the genre. There was something it lacked. *Thrasher* looks great, as does *Tony Hawk*, here's hoping the games continue down the path they've taken. With the difference between the two, I think the gaming world can handle two cool skating games. It's a good day to be a skater and a video game junkie. **C**

DEVELOPER - ROCKSTAR	1 PLAYER	CERBERUS: SKATING
PUBLISHER - TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE	AVAILABLE DECEMBER	IS NOT A CRIME.

P PREVIEW

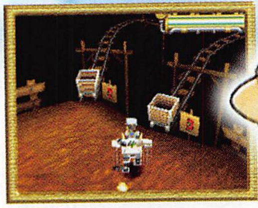
under construction

It's a dog eat ~~dog~~ CAT world.

















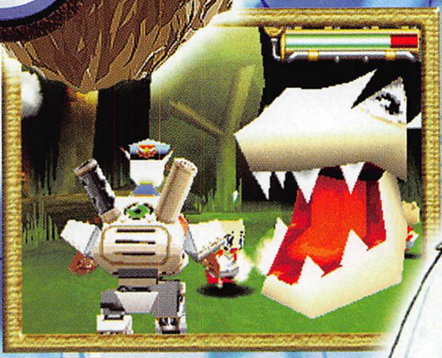
Waffle isn't your ordinary police dog. He doesn't sniff out illegal substances or pursue criminals from their scent... instead, he pilots a one-dog mech suit, catches bad guy cats, and teleports them to the police station with the press of a button. Then again *Tail Concerto's* Prairie world isn't ordinary either; cats and dogs make up the general populace. No humans, no birds, no mailmen... just cats and dogs. It's like a turf war between animal gangs.

When the game starts, you're on the trail of the Black Cat Gang, because they've kidnapped Princess Theria, a fine-looking canine who has a fetish for dogs named after breakfast foods. With the help of his inventor

TAIL CONCERTO

uncle and trusty airship, Waffle is trying to gather the five Crystal stones of all-knowing power. But the Black Cat Gang is also on the trail of the Crystals; and they're not the only thing you have to worry about. Cyan, a palace knight dog, is jealous that you're held so high in the Princess' favor, and he's constantly trying to one-up you for a piece of the spotlight.



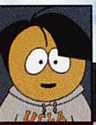




Tail Concerto looks and plays a lot like *Mega Man Legends*, running around, shooting your bubble gun, with minor platforming elements. Our preview ROM shows Atlus has been working hard to make this the best game it can be. Almost all of the text has been translated well, though the planned voice-overs for the anime-ish cut scenes haven't been implemented yet. Thankfully, Atlus has also tweaked the controls, so Waffle no longer suffers from Gabriel Logan's (star of *Syphon Filter*) disease, an unfortunate condition where main characters lose their ability to stop and turn on a dime.

In addition to the basic shooting/platforming, *Tail Concerto* mixes the gameplay up a bit with the occasional mini-game. There's the obligatory mine cart sequence, and there's also a jet pack/flying mini-game, as you hop from floating island to island.

With its newfound tight control, easy-to-learn gameplay, and that happy world of cats and dogs, Atlus' *Tail Concerto* offers something for the younger gamers out there... or the Shidoshis of the planet. Stay tuned for the full review! E



P PREVIEW	EGGO: DON'T DOG THIS GAME.	DEVELOPER - BANDAI	1 PLAYER
		PUBLISHER - ATLUS	AVAILABLE AUGUST











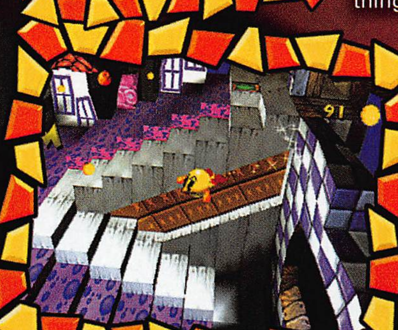
Upon a time, *Pac-Man* ruled the gaming world with an Iron Fist (ah, marvel at the double entendre). Toys, cartoons, candy, T-shirts (of the decal variety... <snif-fle>, the memories), pens, bed sheets, night lights, Underoos, and even a Top 40 hit single (*Pac-Man Fever*, which was recently re-released in all its cheesy '80s glory) — it was a licensing assault that the world of video games had never seen, and wouldn't see again until the arrival of a certain plumber from Brooklyn. It was also the first time a video game character really caught the popular imagination and became more than a mere quarter cruncher, spawning sequel after sequel (including the hybrid pinball power of *Pac-Man Jr.*) and crossing over into mainstream American pop culture at a Pikachu-scorching pace.

It was also the first time since *Godzilla* that a Japanese-bred character truly penetrated the minds of Americans everywhere (and he didn't have a really annoying speech impediment, which is always a plus). Now we're upon *Pac-Man*'s 20th anniversary, and Namco has apparently not forgotten the pellet-gobbler and the contribution he made to the world of gaming and Namco's bank account, because here's *Pac-Man World*. While this game has been in development seemingly forever (starting with a U.S. team and then moving to the Land of the Rising Sun), it looks as if things might finally be coming around for Pac and his ghostly pals. While the game is still quite early, it looks pretty solid, if a little dated. Maybe it's just me, but after being dazzled by Dreamcast games week-in, week-out and a stunning line-up of beautiful N64 titles, it's getting hard to be really excited about a PlayStation game that would have been state-of-the-art two years ago. In fact, I was actually more impressed with the mostly gouraud-shaded rev that made the rounds at last year's E3 rather than the low-res textured look the game currently sports. Still, it's a bit early to make any judgements (Pac-Man's busted victory dance leaves much to be desired... all two frames of it) and hopefully Namco will pull it out in the coming months.

The game, however, is fun... if a little simple. It definitely feels like it's geared towards a much younger crowd, perhaps trying to play ball with some of Nintendo's titles in the 'under 12' arena. PM runs around a number of 2D-with-depth levels (think *Crash* but with a bit more Z-axis movement... a lot like *Pitfall 3D* for those of you

20th ANNIVERSARY PAC-MAN WORLD





that played it). Basic switch-flipping and platform action is yours for the taking but I'm not sure it'll hold the interest of a veteran gamer for the long haul. Still, it's a ways off so here's hoping there's something more to be had.

So as Pac-Man attempts to make a Burt Reynolds-style comeback (he's the biggest star there is... then he isn't... then he sorta is... then he's gone again...whew!), I'll keep the torch burning in the hope that he'll make a return to his past glory. Come to think of it, though, didn't Ms. Pac-Man always wear the pants in that family? **ECM**

DEVELOPER - NAMCO	1 PLAYER
PUBLISHER - NAMCO	AVAILABLE TBA

ECM: I GOT A POCKET FULL OF DOLLARS AND I'M GOING TO THE... EB?! (SUNG TO THE TUNE OF *PAC-MAN FEVER*)

P PREVIEW

PlayStation









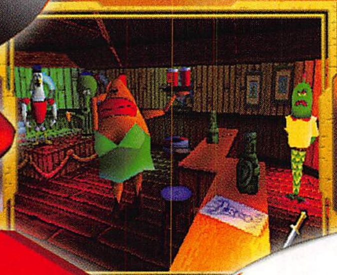


Commonly known for more serious titles like *Wipeout*, Psygnosis sets its sights on a younger audience with *Kingsley*, a carefree adventure through the Fruit Kingdom. Kingsley, a True Knight in training, is called upon to put an end to Bad Custard's shenanigans. The evil wizard has stolen the Book of Magic and cast a spell over four True Knights. But recovering the book and fellow Knights won't be easy, as the young fox-cub hasn't yet mastered all the necessary skills. Drawing inspiration from games like *Croc*, *Zelda*, and *Spyro*, Psygnosis' Camden design team hopes to capitalize on the "cutesy" factor. Created by Scott Butler, of *Croc* fame, Kingsley has that same innocent appeal as his cute, reptilian cousin.

Carrot Castle is where Kingsley's journey begins. Armed only with a shield at the start, you'll find that most of your skills and weapons are obtained along the way. Much of Kingsley's questing involves finding a new weapon or solving simple puzzles. Generally, the puzzles and enemies are skewed towards a younger audience; in contrast to other games of this sort, *Kingsley* has some relatively easy puzzles and not-too-tough enemy encounters.

The difficulty increases at a moderate pace. But ironically, having to use all eight buttons on the PlayStation controller will probably be overwhelming for a lot of the younger players, which this game is aimed squarely at. Jumping can be a chore in some areas where ultra-precise timing is required; though this might be attributed to the fact that control hasn't been tweaked properly. Remember the obnoxious blathering every time a conversation in *Banjo Kazooie* occurred? If you haven't played *Banjo*, imagine the sound the teacher from Peanuts makes when she speaks. Well, this mumbling sound has been reproduced similarly in *Kingsley*, and it happens every time there is a conversation. Keep your fingers crossed that the final copy has an option to shut this feature off. Hopefully, Psygnosis can clear up these few problems that plagued our preview version.

Just keep in mind that this game is targeted at a young, pre-teen audience, and most of us won't appreciate the simplistic nature of the game. From the get-go, Kingsley's world has the look of being trapped in Disneyland. While that doesn't sound desirable to you and I, I'm sure youngsters will dig it. C





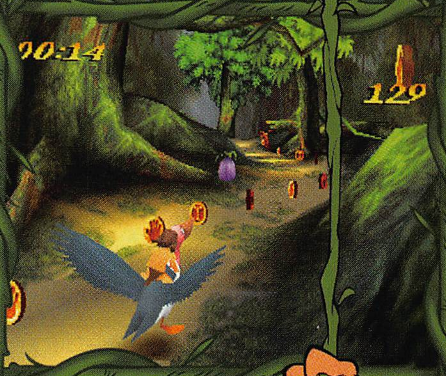


KINGSLEY

Cerberus: "I'll slep ye with me twig and berries," so sayeth Kingsley.

Developer - Psygnosis	1 Player
Publisher - Psygnosis	Available September

Disney's TARZAN™











Disney-themed platforming games have one of the most pristine records in all of gamedom, thanks mostly to a completely phenomenal run on 16-bit consoles including games like *Aladdin*, *The Lion King*, and *The Jungle Book*; all of which were worked on by current and past members of Shiny, The Neverhood, and Planet Moon Studios. Since the scattering of those various team members to all corners of the industry, the task of coding stellar Disney-based properties fell to Disney Interactive and Eurocom which was responsible for the graphically brilliant, gameplay deficient *Hercules* on PlayStation. Well surprise, the same duo is now working on Disney's *Tarzan*.

The first thing you'll notice upon initial inspection of *Tarzan's* visuals is that the game has totally done away with any semblance of sprite-based life — you'll not find a single member of spritus extinctus anywhere in this game. That being said, things don't start off too bad with solid looking critters and a decently modeled young Tarzan (he ages as he moves through the game a la *The Lion King*) cruising through lushly rendered jungles, collecting tokens and swinging from vines. It's when Tarzan progresses to an adult that it starts to break down. Unfortunately not nearly enough polys are used to represent Tarzan in this state and he looks like a big, brown shambling lump. Let's hope he gets a newer skin before final release... perhaps from one of the cute little cats he slays with impunity (see below).

On the gameplay side, this is pretty much the same engine that powered *Hercules*. While control is questionable (the reaction time is still **way** too slow), some of the sequences are a blast, particularly the 'into the screen' tree sliding ride and the almost obligatory 'running towards the screen while being chased by a stampeding herd of *x*' (x being elephants this time out). If they can fix the slow reaction time, this *Pandemonium* meets *Crash Bandicoot* adventure may have something to pound its chest over.

One other note: I don't know about you, but a game that has Tarzan swinging around dispatching cute and cuddly jungle fauna with wild abandon, is a little, uh, questionable. While Tarzans of old would have very little trouble carving a swath of destruction through the African jungle, I'm not sure it fits with the new, kinder, gentler Tarzan. Perhaps some anger management classes are in order (I'm sure Waka could recommend a good course). Hey, at least they turn into a happy little cloud of butterflies.

I'll be back shortly with the last word on Disney's *Tarzan*. Till then, go check out the movie, stay away from the broken action figures and contemplate buying the game till you hear back from me next month. **ECM**





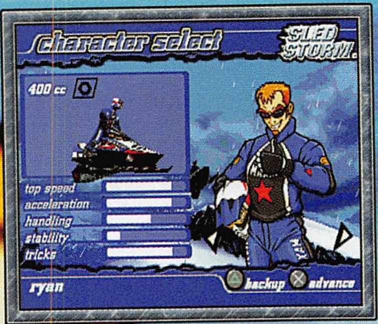


Developer - Eurocom	1 Player	ECM: Me Tarzan.
Publisher - Sony	Available Summer	You pelt.

P PREVIEW

The first time I saw this game, they had to drag me away from it. Finding an original, enjoyable, racing title is a pretty rare occurrence these days. So I was hooked right away. Sure to be a sleeper hit, *Sled Storm* will greatly increase the hip-quotient of snowmobiling and give gamers a much-needed departure from the boring, standard fare that clogs the genre.





While the idea of a snowmobile racing game may be original, the modes and options are far from. *Sled Storm* is structured like any racing sim, equipped with a set of playable characters, a compliment of tracks, and the standard Championship, Time Trial, and Quick Race modes. Each of the six racers has his or her own strengths and weaknesses, ranging from top speed and acceleration to handling and stability. The composite of these individual stats results in distinct racing styles for each.

There are over 50 different tricks that you can perform in *Sled Storm*. While executing 360s and "Heel Clickers" may not help you win the race, your accumulated Trick Points can be used towards the purchase of sled upgrades.



For your enjoyment, there are 14 tracks to race on. They are broken down into two types of course: open tracks and SnoCross. The SnoCross tracks are defined racing tracks with little room for exploration, while the open courses have wider areas to explore (can you say shortcuts?). The open tracks are made available to you as you progress through the game. You will have the option to race during the day or night, as well as alter the weather conditions. It is very cool to feel the different effects that the weather has on the handling of the snowmobiles.

I think I just ran over Warren Miller!





The only problems with the game at this point are frame rate and clipping issues. Both, however, are being fixed for the final. The game's physics engine and control are excellent, as are the graphics and the 2-player mode (three and four player contests are a little sketchy).

In typical EA fashion, *Sled Storm* has been given the audio gloss with the signing of such musicians (if you can actually call them that) as Rob Zombie (how many game soundtracks has he been on anyway — not to mention movie soundtracks), Econoline Crush, and Uberzone. It's pretty sweet to be able to shred through the snow to the sound of blood-pumping Dragula. **EN**

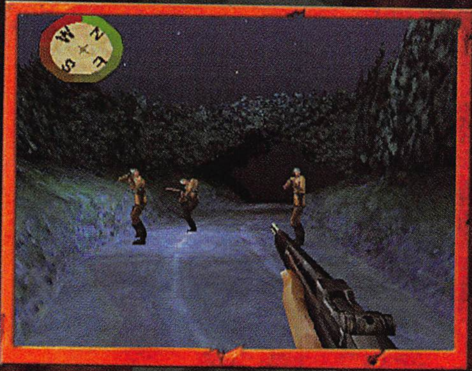




SLED STORM



PREVIEW		
EL NIÑO: Any game with Rob Zombie is a good game.	Developer - EA Publisher - EA Canada	1-4 Players Available Summer



MEDAL OF HONOR™

A single parachute silently descends from the midnight sky, dropping down somewhere in a copse of trees. It's the Black Forest shortly after D-Day, but still deep behind enemy lines. Operation Overlord may have been a success, but there is still much to be done before the war is over. The skulking figure of a lone soldier slips into the shadows, on his way toward the first of his objectives.





This is the premise behind EA's newest action adventure title, *Medal Of Honor*. A first-person shooter, *Medal Of Honor* puts you in the shoes of an OSS (Office of Strategic Services) operative, on a secret mission behind German lines. You'll be responsible for completing a series of special objectives, all to further help the Allies on their road to victory.

While the developers are trying to avoid the comparison, I'm going to come out and say it, right off the bat. *Medal Of Honor* is *Goldeneye*, set in WWII, plain and simple. Replace Bond with an American spy, pepper the missions with a good mixture of straight-up fire fights and stealth, and add the backdrop of WWII, and there you have it; all of a sudden Oddjob and Jaws are Colonel Klink and Schultz. This is far from a bad thing, though. The PlayStation is sorely in need of a quality corridor shooter and these guys look like they may deliver, big-time.



DreamWorks employed the help of Dale Dye, the retired USMC captain who has made a living off consulting for Hollywood war movies. Having helped make films such as *Platoon, Born On the Fourth of July* and, most recently, *Saving Private Ryan* more authentic, he seemed to be the perfect man for the job. With his direction, developers have managed to nail the look and feel of what it would be like to be engaged in covert ops, in WWII. He made sure that enemy AI, the weapons and the missions all properly reflected the time. Enemy tactics are authentic, the mission storylines make sense and the weapons perform like they are supposed to (with the exception of the pineapple grenade; the shrapnel effects are just too complex for the PSX).

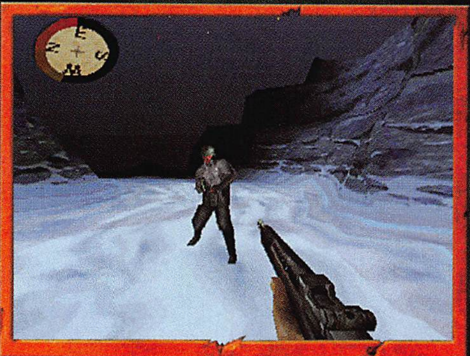


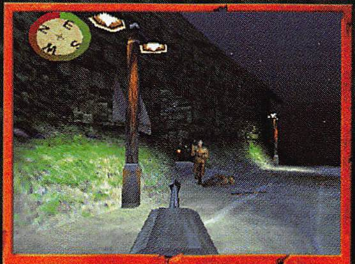


The game's multi-player modes will supply some interesting challenges. While you will have the standard death match and co-op modes for fragging fun, there will also be a hot potato mode. This will be a grenade tossing contest with dire consequences for those that fumble (think Al Pacino in *Scent of a Woman*). There will also be the option to toggle between English and German for enemy dialogue. Keep it on German for some real immersion.

Developers are still at work tweaking such areas as highly destructible environments, multiple bullet contact points (wing that guy in the leg, and watch him stumble to the ground) and a suspicion meter that enemies utilize when you are in disguise. *Medal Of Honor* could end up being be The Big One, for the PlayStation this Christmas Season. **EN**







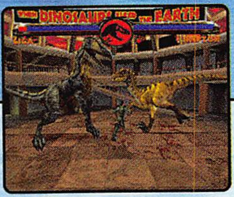
DEVELOPER - DREAMWORKS	1-2 PLAYERS	EL NINO: ROMMEL, TOJO,
PUBLISHER - ELECTRONIC ARTS	AVAILABLE FALL	MUSSOLINI... WIMPS, ALL OF THEM.

P PREVIEW



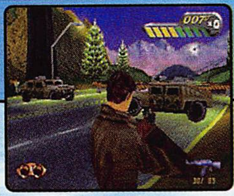
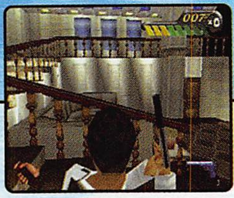
COMING SOON







Warpath (EA) — *Primal Rage* revisited? With some excellent 3D models and a more realistic approach to fighting than *Primal Rage*, get ready for a fighter of Jurassic size.



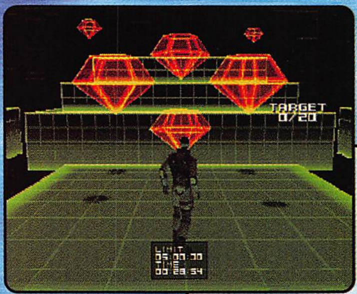
Tomorrow Never Dies (EA) — Bond is back in an action/adventure game much different from *GoldenEye*. More than just a first person shooter, look out for some new fun with 007.

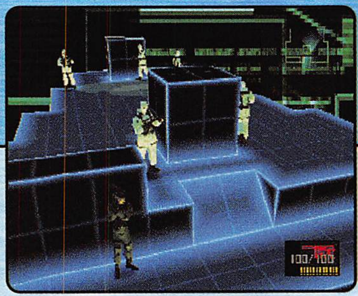
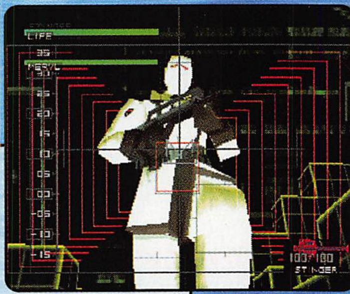




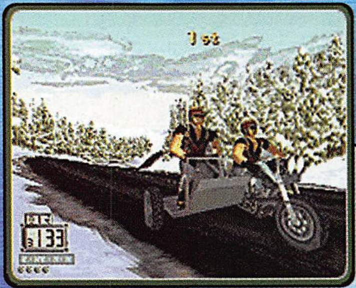


Soul of the Samurai (Konami) — *Resident Evil* meets *Bushido Blade*! Choose between a ronin of brute strength or a female ninja of incredible swiftness as you do battle with unnatural evils.



Metal Gear Solid VR (Konami) — With 300 new VR missions, *MGS VR Missions* will satisfy even the hungriest *Metal Gear Solid* fan.



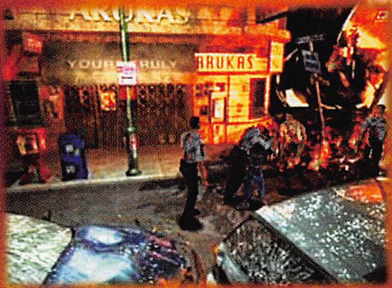


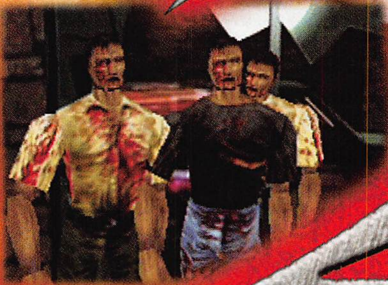

Road Rash Unchained (EA) — The road rumbling continues with more weapons, refined combat system, and sidecar buddies! Strap on that helmet tight.



"Thousand Arms fuses hand-drawn sprites, beautiful polygonal landscapes, and interactive anime cut scenes together with stunning results." -Gamers Republic
THOUSAND ARMS™
Meis
Soushi
Wyna
Front
Back
ATTACK
SPELL
SUMMON
DEFEND
ITEM
NEXT CHAR
RETREAT
Kyleen
Do you think you can survive in this world by following the rules?
•Double disk RPG epic packed with theatrical quality animation and 12 hours of spoken dialog!
•The first ever RPG/Dating Simulation on the Playstation®!
•Unique combination of hand-drawn artwork and wonderful 3-D environments!
PlayStation
ATLUS
www.atlus.com
RPG
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

RESIDENT EVIL 2

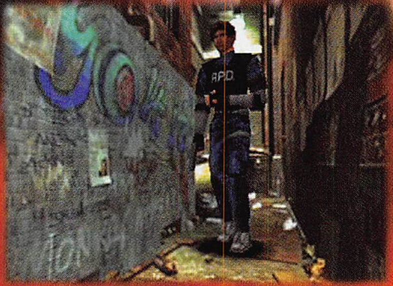




There won't be a shortage of *Resident Evil* titles this Christmas. Mikami-san's pride and joy will make an appearance on every major console from the Dreamcast to the GameBoy Color. They won't all come out at the same time, but the fact remains — *Resident Evil* is stronger than ever. Besides inventing the survival horror genre, the series has proven to be one of the most popular on the PlayStation. Those of us who are fortunate enough to own multiple systems may think the release of *Resident Evil 2* on the Nintendo 64 is redundant, having beat the living daylights out of both scenarios more than a year ago. The truth of the matter is that only a small percent of the gaming community has more than one console. By releasing *RE2* anew on the N64, Capcom can reach a massive amount of potential *Resident Evil* players.

Too much can go wrong when converting a game that takes up 2 CDs and cramming it into one cartridge. Advancing the story without using the pre-rendered cut-scenes in the PlayStation version would be lame; and somehow, Angel Studios managed to include the footage. Of course, it's compressed and nowhere near the quality of its CD counterpart, but at least it's there. Nintendo 64 owners will hit the floor when they catch a glimpse of these movies. Okay, so the movies made it in, but what about the polygonal characters against the pre-rendered backgrounds? At the time of this writing, *Resident Evil 2* requires the Expansion Pak.







Remarkably, the actual character models look fantastic, with sharp edges and textures. But regrettably, the backgrounds didn't get the same improved treatment. Presumably because of the Nintendo 64's ineptitude with 2D, the color depth has been dropped considerably. This causes some serious banding to appear in areas with a lot of colors, but not all the locales suffer from banding. One of my complaints when I played the PlayStation version was that the backgrounds were generally too dark. I'm happy to say that you don't need a flashlight pointed at your TV to play *Resident Evil 2* for the Nintendo 64.

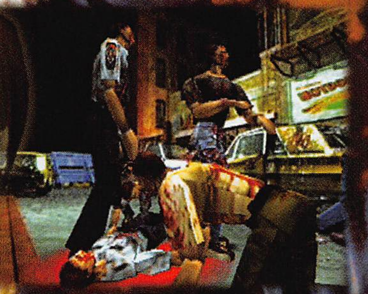


P PREVIEW CERBERUS: MR X AND THE LICKERS ARE BACK AGAIN!	DEVELOPER - ANGEL STUDIOS	1 PLAYER
	PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	AVAILABLE FALL

Another concern for me, was the whole violence factor. Violence is one of *RE's* best selling points — an *RE* without violence is like Eggo after a long night of drinking without his barf bag. Nintendo and Capcom managed to find a middle ground. The title screen has options for blood color and violence level. Blood color options are red, green, and blue; although I don't see the difference, blood is blood no matter what color. At low violence level, blood sprays with less force and limbs remain on their bodies. High violence level is the same as the PlayStation. Though you'd expect details to be lost in the port, real-time lighting and flying shells made it into the cart version. Sure they're small details, but it's the little things like that which make a good game great.

A run button was never a good idea in my eyes. Thanks to the analog thumb stick, the run button is a thing of the past. Players used to *RE's* control scheme still have the option of using the digital pad (combined with the L shoulder button to run), but I find simulated-analog controller less frustrating — not to mention easier on the thumbs. Firing is accomplished by pressing and holding the R shoulder button, then pressing the A button or Z Trigger. I prefer using the trigger. Moving around Raccoon City and the R.P.D. doesn't feel like a weekend chore with the N64 controller. It's a much more pleasant experience, and my hands didn't hurt after playing for a couple of hours.















In its preview state, *Resident Evil 2* had no Claire scenario. We'll have to wait and see how the game fleshes out when Capcom finalizes the code. The arrival of *Resident Evil* on Nintendo's fun machine is a welcome one. Besides adding another game to the "A" list, players who felt shafted during the initial chaos will finally get their fill. This turn of events is bound to make a lot of N64 owners happy campers. Let's hope it's a sign of things to come; keep your fingers crossed and hope that Capcom decides to release more of its lineup. **C**

Hello everyone... my name is Eggo.

"Hi, Eggo."

...and I'm a *Rayman* freak. It's nothing to be proud of, I know... But I was one of the few and the proud who finished the original *Rayman*... completely.

"Ohhhh..." <the whole group shakes their head in knowing sympathy>

I'm talkin' about the feat few have accomplished — saving all 100 electoons... It took the heart of a lion, the skills of a ninja gamer, and the patience of a one-legged man in a potato sack race. Oh, I remember that dark period of my life... That week or so of constant kicking and screaming, controller throwing, and cursing at the 'Ubi guys' for making such a frustrating 2D platformer. But when it was done, and my sanity returned, I had nothing but praise to sing for Rayman, the former source for my discontent. And then the wait began...

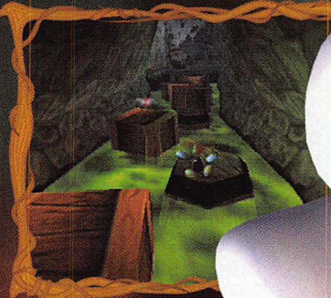
Now, four years later, a new Rayman rears its ugly head, and it's 3D... But wait! All is not lost, because this is a 3D platformer which you **should** be looking forward to. After countless 2D soapbox rants and cries for classic gameplay, we're beginning to see a disturbing trend in video games: 3D games which actually play like 2D games.

"Oooooh..."

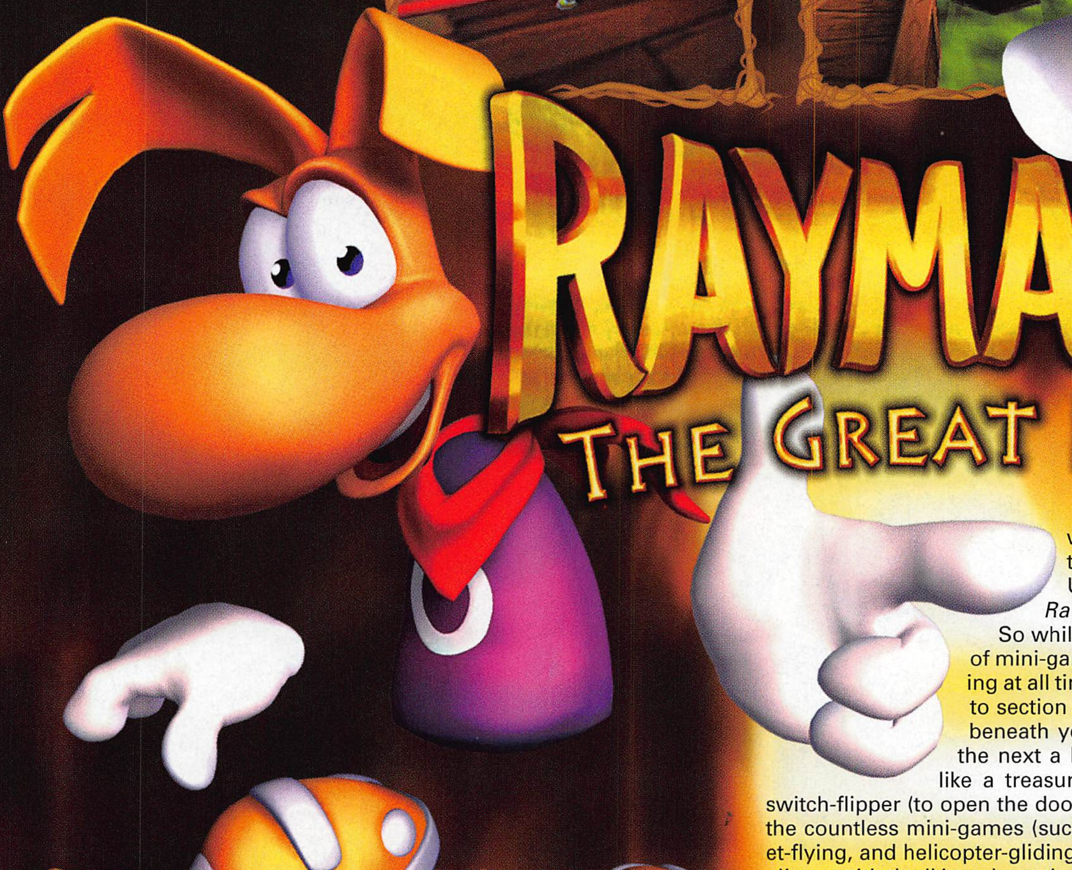
OK, maybe it's a little early to call it a trend, but games like *Sonic Adventure* and now *Rayman 2: The Great Escape* give us hope that not every developer out there is satisfied with making a beautifully texture-mapped







RAYMAN 2
THE GREAT ESCAPE



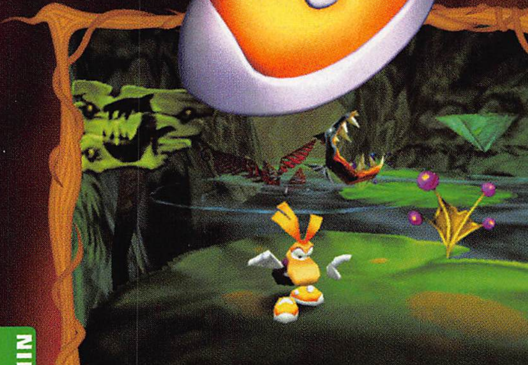
world, only to let gameplay slide by the wayside. No, the programmers at Ubi Soft are committed to making *Rayman 2* play as good as it looks.

So while it isn't a 2D game, the endless supply of mini-games keep the gameplay fresh and exciting at all times. Whether it's jumping from section to section as a pirate ship blasts away the bridge beneath you, or swinging from one pink ring to the next a la the original, *Rayman 2* doesn't play like a treasure hunt (find 10 coins to continue) or switch-flipper (to open the door), like the average 3D platformer. And the countless mini-games (such as water-skiing, snowboarding, rocket-flying, and helicopter-gliding) spice things up even more.

I've avoided talking about the game's graphics to this point because they're good... In fact, they're too good. There are very few N64 games which can hold a candle to *Rayman 2's* sheer graphical might, and those games are made by developers like Rare, Iguana, and Nintendo — companies you should all pray in the direction of every night before you turn off your N64.

While it's easy to ooze over the spectacular, lush environments, gorgeous hi-res graphics, and vibrant colorful backgrounds, I don't want the visuals to overshadow *Rayman 2's* most beautiful feature: its gameplay. Both the incredible graphics **and** the varied gameplay left me anxious to finish every level just so I could see the next.

<Sigh> But all is not well in the land of *Rayman 2* — for the game has its share





P PREVIEW

EGGO: LOOK MA, NO ARMS.	DEVELOPER - UBI SOFT	1 PLAYER
	PUBLISHER - UBI SOFT	AVAILABLE OCTOBER



of problems in its preview state. The primary concern right now is the camera. Walk around too much and it can get hung up on an invisible hook, often leading to blind exploration and even... death <gasp!>. And the second 'problem' is the game's sound. While I know this is the Nintendo 64, *Rayman 2* has many sections where the music is simply non-existent. Let's hope this is because the game's not finished, and the score hasn't been implemented yet. As for the camera issues, this is probably what the team is tweaking right now. Ubi Soft still has plenty of time to make the necessary alterations so that this masterpiece comes out flawless in October.

So I know you've all been waiting many long hard years for the second coming of the purple hero. Well, he's coming... and *Rayman 2* will be well worth the wait. Now if you'll excuse me, I have to ready my hair transplants, find a steel-cased controller, and pad my walls in anticipation of its arrival. **E**



Once upon a time...

In 1996 at E3, *Rayman 2* was on display at the Ubi Soft booth. As gorgeous as the original, *Rayman 2* was initially a 2D game, complete with old school platformer gameplay. Years later, the game returned to E3 with a beautiful, albeit 3D, look. Wailing in anguish, gamers saw one of the last bastions of 2D platforming crumble before our very eyes, under the crushing weight of the mighty polygon menace.

It's a shame, too, because that 2D sequel played really well. There was one enemy who caught your fist (when you threw it), stuck a stick of dynamite in it, and let it return to you. Now, your fist was a ticking time bomb which you had to avoid, till you found safety behind a wall.

Despite vehement protests from old school gamers and programmers, the final decision was made that Rayman, like Mario and Sonic, would make the leap (no pun intended) from sprites to polys. Fortunately, the programmers kept a single goal in mind when making this game: make a 3D game, but keep the gameplay as close to 2D as possible. For a 3D game, Rayman 2 plays remarkably well, compared to the standard 3D platformer fare.













Movie adaptations have never translated well in the gaming world. Mimicking what happens in a movie tends to be very challenging, particularly if the designers plan on keeping true to the silver screen (*GoldenEye* broke that mold, however). Comic books, on the other hand, have always seemed to have an edge... in theory, anyway. Using the underlying story of a comic without the restrictions of a specific plot, the design team has a choice of options. And *Shadowman* is the latest comic-to-game translation to benefit from this.

You won't find anything more disturbing or morbid than *Shadowman.* As the time of the Apocalypse draws near, a being known only as Legion has chosen five of the most evil serial killers in history to aid him in his plans to unite the worlds of Deadside and Liveside. Deadside is the realm of the dead; Liveside is the world as we know it. Mike has been endowed with the powers of the Shadowman, and it's his duty to stop Legion in its tracks.

Mike's adventure begins in the bayous of Louisiana. Good thing for you that there aren't any enemies around, because he has no weapons to begin with. First thing you do is locate Nettle (his voodoo mistress) and learn more about your destiny. From Louisiana, you must venture into the depths of Deadside and embark on one of the most surreal quests ever. A teddy bear that belonged to Mike's brother, Luke, will grant him the power to warp from place to place. Deadside is where Mike becomes Shadowman. Within the boundaries of Deadside, Mike's gun becomes the Shadowgun — his primary weapon to stop the undead. You'll also have to collect Dark Souls in Deadside as you go. These Dark Souls increase Michael's already supernatural powers. With each Dark Soul he obtains, a sacred tattoo is etched on his body. Needless to say, he looks gnarly when you've earned all the Dark Souls. It's not going to be a walk in the park as various beings will try to stop you dead in your tracks (pun intended) [ed's note: <groan>].

There are a lot of cool elements within the game and its story, but in its current state there's a lot that needs to be addressed. The frame-rate is acceptable in lo-res mode, but plugging in an expansion pak and playing hi-res mode is sheer torture. Also, strafing is performed by pressing and holding the R shoulder button. When held down, you can strafe right or left by pressing the thumb stick in the appropriate direction. This doesn't work out because you cannot circle strafe around corners and such. Shadowman does have auto-circle strafing during battle with enemies, but it'd be nice to have it at all times. Finally, the gameplay doesn't have a cohesive feel just yet.

You'll have to take all my gripes with a grain of salt since, after all, this is only a preview copy that I'm playing. We've been told that many of the problems will be addressed. If that's the case, then this should be the wild ride the N64 has been waiting for. **C**

SHADOW MAN

under construction

P PREVIEW

CERBERUS: Dark, very dark. I'm scared...	Developer - Iguana UK	1 Player
	Publisher - Acclaim	Available September

COMING SOON

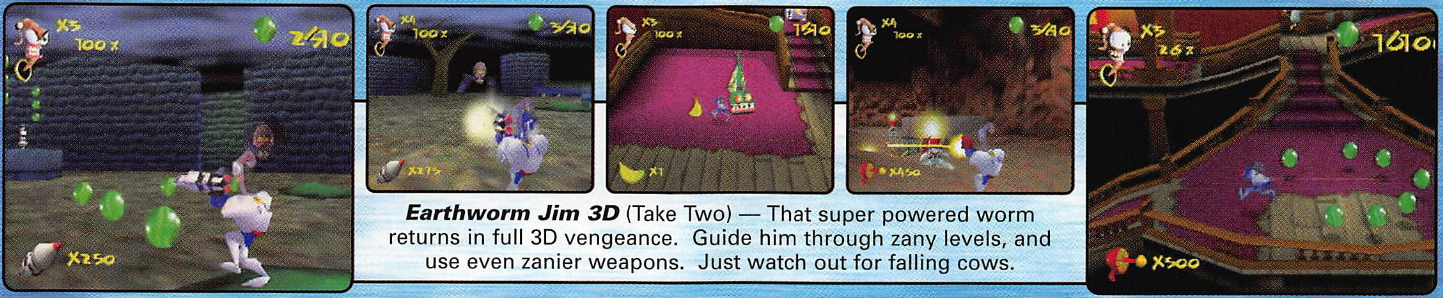
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Armorines (Acclaim) — You're part of the toughest combat corps in the galaxy. They're the ugliest scum of the galaxy intent on destruction. This first person shooter looks HOT!



Donkey Kong 64 (Rare) — Monkey business doesn't get more fun that this. More than just the platformer from its previous days, *DK64* promises an adventure on par with *Banjo-Kazooie*.



Earthworm Jim 3D (Take Two) — That super powered worm returns in full 3D vengeance. Guide him through zany levels, and use even zanier weapons. Just watch out for falling cows.



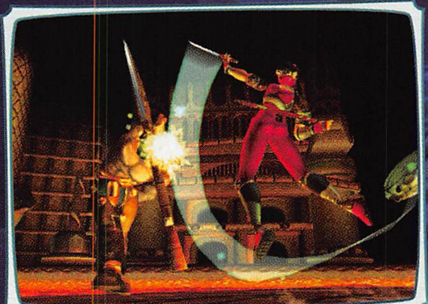
Starcraft (Nintendo) — Those PC gamers think they have it made in the real-time strategy. Well, N64 owners will get their chance at this awesome title.



Command & Conquer (Nintendo) — Looking surprisingly almost as good as the PC version, *C&C* will show N64 owners what they've been missing.



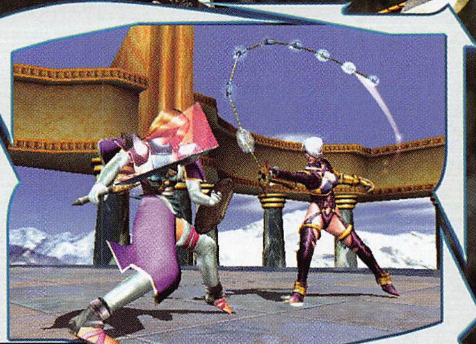














Soul Edge (renamed *Soul Blade* for the US PlayStation) was a visual spectacle when it first debuted in arcades. Though not well received by hard-core gamers, it was fun nonetheless — a lot like a combination of *Virtua Fighter* and *Samurai Shodown*. Oddly enough, it managed to earn itself an upgrade, with Cervantes and Hwang made playable in *Soul Edge* version 2.0. Even the less-than-perfect port for the PlayStation was still a sight to behold. Both in its arcade and home incarnations, the game displayed some wicked graphics — the particle effects and transparencies were just beautiful. And with that much detail given to the fighters, it was a surprise to see fully polygonal backdrops.

While not as infinitely deep as, let's say, *Tekken,* it still managed to introduce some really cool gameplay features like the Guard Impact, Weapon Break, and Critical Edge attacks. Moving forward or back while hitting Guard performed Guard Impacts, which allowed you to deflect an opponent's attack with either a Parry or Repel, respectively. Critical Edge attacks showcased the game's speed through the attack's silky smooth animation.

Fast forward to 1998, Namco releases *Soul Calibur* in arcades across the country. As a sequel to *Soul Edge,* it sported total optical overload — even more so than its predecessor. Non-aesthetic enhancements included a faster game, more characters, extra attacks, improved, free-roaming 3D control and much cooler combos. Yet once again, Namco didn't see the popularity it had wished for.

Well, things just keep getting better. The Dreamcast translation of *Soul Calibur* steps on its arcade cousin with size 13, steel-toed boots. First of all, *Soul Calibur* DC runs at a higher resolution than the arcade game. In-game fighters and backgrounds appear to have a higher polygon count too. Indeed, *Soul Calibur* is probably the most notable instance of a game making the trip home in significantly better condition than when it started in the arcades. Evidently, I'm not the only person who noticed the improvement. Namco debuted an early version of *Soul Calibur* at

SOUL

P PREVIEW	CERBERUS: WHAT'S FOR DESSERT? TEKKEN OR ACE COMBAT?	DEVELOPER - NAMCO	1-2 PLAYERS
		PUBLISHER - NAMCO	AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER







the Electronic Entertainment Exposition (E3), and the lines for the game were so long that I didn't get to play a single match.

My dissatisfaction turned to happiness when the kind folks at Namco came down for an afternoon with the 30% complete E3 version of *Soul Calibur*. With more than three-fourths of the game yet to be finished, there was a lot we didn't get to see. But even in its early state, *Soul Calibur* managed to bring all productivity to a screeching halt at *GameFan* [ed's note: don't worry, that sort of thing happens all the time here]. There wasn't a single staff member that wasn't floored by the beauty of the attract mode demo. Most of the characters that were playable were very faithful to the arcade piece. Though Mitsurugi and Ivy were the only ones capable of a 'character versus character' match-up.

Real-time lighting is some of the best we've seen. Multiple sources not only are lit correctly but also don't affect the frame-rate or polygon count whatsoever. Under penalty of death (and a dance in the buff by El Niño), we can't reveal some of the secret characters, but be prepared to greet everyone you saw in the arcade plus some additional surprises.

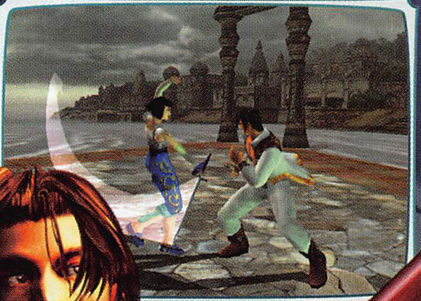
Soul Calibur supports both the Dreamcast's digital pad and analog thumb stick, and I found the control to be equally responsive with both devices. Juggle combos come out with ease no matter what you choose as a controller. If you want the real thing, your best bet is to pick up one of those heavy duty arcade sticks. Features such as the Parrying and Repel system are in place and work like a charm [ed's note: AGH! Cliché meter going off the charts!]. It's so satisfying to anticipate an attack and counterattack accordingly. The high frame-rate, bolstered with good control, improves the chances of a successful counterattack.

Some sound effects and audio tracks and stages have yet to be placed into the code, but there were enough to get a feel for where the game is headed. When heard through the right speaker setup, the surround sound is chilling. Swords clashing, limbs breaking... it's all so satisfying.

In its previewable state, *Soul Calibur* is a ways off from being final. Three weeks seems like a long time to wait to get our hands on this monster. The worst is yet to come when we battle it out to see who has first dibs on the home version. I dare say that we'd be happy to have just the unfinished version... and that's with more than half the roster missing in action. Modes like versus and training and the options menu have yet to be finalized.

We'll hold off on final judgements until we have a reviewable copy that has everything from Soul Edge to Yoshimitsu, down to the pre-rendered character endings. Let me put it this way, unless a group of Japanese Yakuza mobsters gun down the entire *Soul Calibur* team, it can only get better... and it's not bad to start with. As it stands right now, the game is a major programming achievement and will continue to progress. **C**







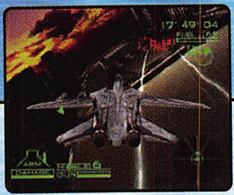


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Dreamcast

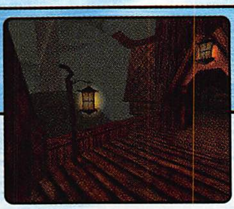




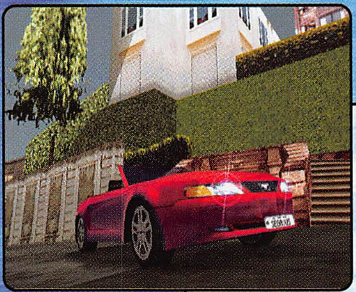
Air Force Delta (Konami) — Ace Combat has a new bogey on its tail, and *Air Force Delta* looks to establish a new air superiority in the video game industry.

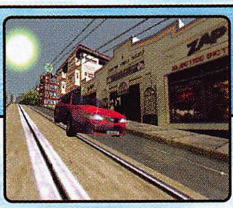
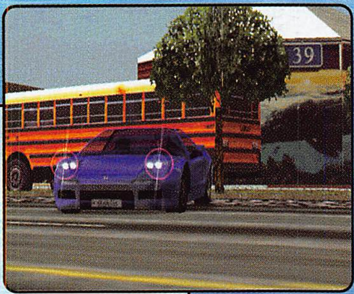






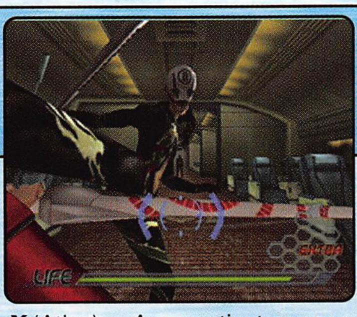
Blades of Vengeance (Crave) — Take the role of a valiant knight as he rids a magical world of its dark evils. Enormous levels and great special effects are just the beginning of this adventure.

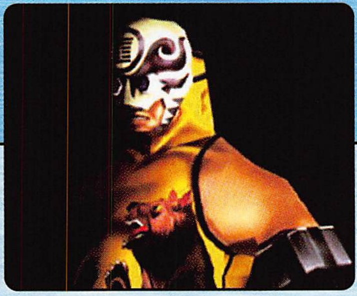


Metropolis Street Racer (Bizarre Creations) — Great special effects coupled with realistic urban street racing makes *Metropolis Street Racer* a stand out title in its class.

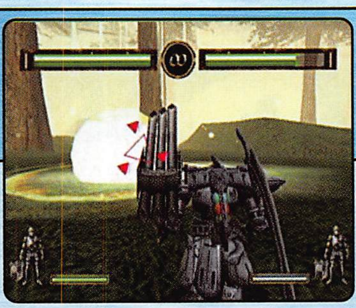
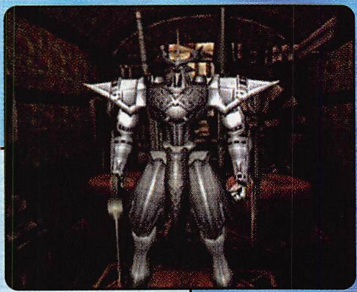







Maken X (Atlus) — As a sentient weapon, possess the minds of different characters and use their unique abilities in this dark adventure featuring twisted 3D worlds.



Frame Gride (From Software) — With spectacular mech design, awesome special effects, and cool hand-to-hand combat, mech lovers watch out for this one.

COMING SOON

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Dreamcast



Resident Evil: Code Veronica (Capcom) — Real time environments added with the power of the DC will make this *Resident Evil* the most frightening experience ever!



Tokyo Xtreme Racer (Crave) — Awesome lighting effects, 100 different parts to modify your car, and a blistering frame rate make this racer one to look out for.



TrickStyle (Acclaim) — Hover-board your way through the city as you gain notoriety and money. Daredevil-like tricks and fantastic special effects will make this one a must get.



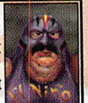
Wild Metal Country (Take Two) — Take control of your modifiable tank as you bounty hunt the wanted. Internet play makes this a highly anticipated title.



Street Fighter Alpha 3 (Capcom) — *Marvel Vs. Capcom* demonstrated the DC's 2D power. So there's little doubt that *SFA3* on the DC will be nothing less than arcade perfect.

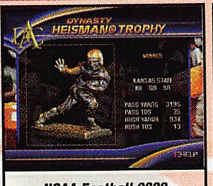
GameFan Sports

And so it begins... The first wave of Dreamcast sports titles is here and I couldn't be happier. With a logjam of mediocre sports games clogging the PlayStation arteries, and little of playable fare, on the N64, the future was beginning to look bleak for sports gamers. Thankfully, as game publishers are pumping out more and more sequel-driven drivel, the virgin Sega console will stand as the most fertile ground for hungry developers to make a mark.



I'm going back to school! Even though my BC dynasty is suckin', I just keep on playing. Why? 'Cause this game is just so damn fun! Besides, maybe I'll be able recruit some linemen who actually know how to run block, at the end of my first season. Being able to rush would be nice.

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 9 **94**



NCAA Football 2000
PlayStation
EA Sports

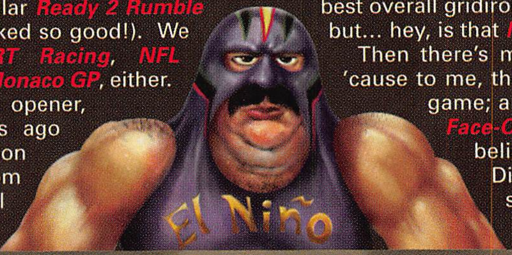


Ahh, college football at its finest. With all of the bowls (how many are there now? 120?) and the addition of the Heisman Trophy, it's as though I'm involved with the real thing! Finally, an arena where my USC boys can finally beat UCLA (that is, assuming I get good enough to make that happen).

G 8 C 8 P 9 M 7 O 7 **89**

And what a mark they are making. Here it is, just before launch, and there are already half a dozen sports titles — all of which look great. With no EA in there, Visual Concepts, who is the core of Sega Sports, is lookin' to make the biggest splash with *Sega NFL 2000*, *Sega NHL 2000* and *Sega NBA 2000* (tentative titles). Midway also has a strong line-up, with *NFL Blitz 2000* and the stellar *Ready 2 Rumble* (boxing has never looked so good!). We mustn't forget *CART Racing*, *NFL Quarterback Club* or *Monaco GP*, either.

In the last sports opener, which was 2 months ago (The Man cut the section last issue to make room for E3 coverage!) I complained that my fantasy baseball team was sucking. No more. It looks like El Niño's club may take home the top honors, although it is a battle with onetime co-editor, Joe Kidd, for the top slot. He's got no pitching, though, so it looks good for me.



Although only a grim outlook can be seen for PlayStation sports, August does issue in the one bright spot on the yearly horizon: football games. This issue, two of the best lock horns once again. Will EA's *Madden* maintain its spot at the top of the heap, or will *GameDay* reclaim the crown it once held? Which college title will reign supreme (and will *NCAA Football* remain the best overall gridiron title)? Still too early to make any final judgements but... hey, is that *NFL 2000* over there...?

Then there's my favorite genre: hockey. Just call me The Rick, 'cause to me, there's nothing better than a down-and-dirty hockey game; and no company builds a better game that EA. Can *Face-Off* steal some of that *NHL* thunder? Can you believe how good Visual Concepts' hockey title looks!? Did I mention we are the only ones with it, too? Can someone please kidnap Hasek the next time he plays the Bruins? *—El Niño*

NCAA GameBreaker 2000

P Preview

Developer: 989 Studios | Available: Fall
Publisher: 989 Studios | # of Players: 1-8

"oh, the tonalities of Keith Jackson"

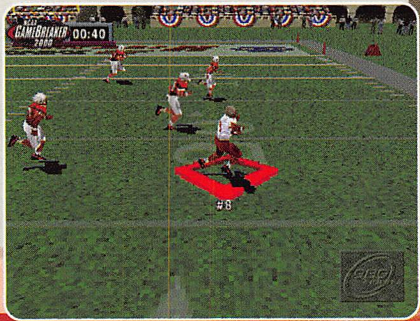
Let's be honest, last year's *GameBreaker* wasn't very good. The on-field graphics may have been good, but the messy interface screens and atrocious linemen AI made it virtually unplayable (oh how I remember Bubba's screams of frustration).

Oh, what a difference a year makes. With a spiffy new interface, improved AI and some new features, *GameBreaker 2000* has become a title I'm actually looking forward to playing!

While it is still too early to start picking apart the gameplay, there are several areas of improvement that are immediately noticeable. For one, the play-calling screen is much cleaner and easier to understand. Sure, this is just aesthetics, but when you gotta look at the thing after every play, an ugly one would drive you slowly insane. Also improved is the commentary by Keith Jackson. I dare say that *GameBreaker 2000* has some of the best commentary of any football sim (far outclassing EA's college title) and it makes a world of difference, when coupled with the beefy on-screen stat updates that pepper every game of *GameBreaker*.

Like *GameDay*, *GameBreaker 2000* has added their own dynasty mode, allowing you to coach and GM a team through multiple seasons. Also added is the ability to draft the players into *NFL GameDay*, so EA can no longer say it is the only title with that option.

Of less importance, but still worth mentioning, is the change to the player model. With a higher poly count and more motion-captured moves, the *GameBreaker* players look and move better. None of this matter if the linemen AI still sucks, but that doesn't seem to play as big of a factor in *GameBreaker 2000*. From this early version, the gameplay looks to have made some strong strides and having done that, *GameBreaker 2000* has become a game to look for. **EN**



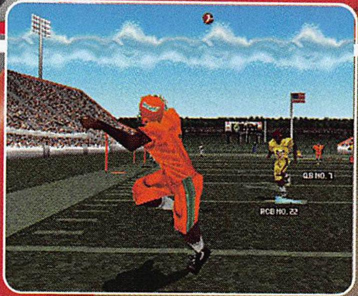






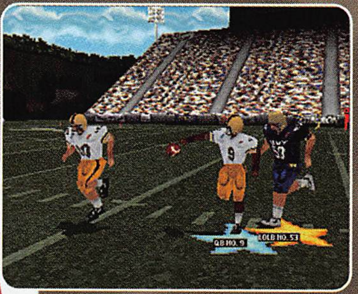
NCAA Football 2000

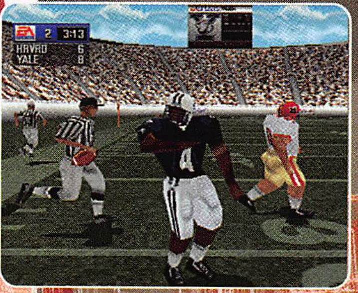
"Man, do the BC Eagles suck..."











PlayStation

Developer: EA
Publisher: EA Sports

Available: August
of Players: 1-8

R Review

NCAA Football 99 was the best 32-bit football game of last year. It bested *GameDay*, *Madden* and *NCAA GameBreaker*, making me wonder if there was any reason to ever even *play* those titles again. Whatever the aspect, *NCAA Football* was better. I logged so many hours, in Dynasty Mode, my friends thought I had blown a gasket. Quite honestly, it was the only football title I was truly enthusiastic about, going into this season.

Unfortunately, this is the first reviewable football game I have seen this year, so I can't crown it king...yet. I say yet because *NCAA Football 2000* is even better than last year's, and most sports franchises evolve more slowly than West Virginians.

"This is the game to beat, and it will be tough."

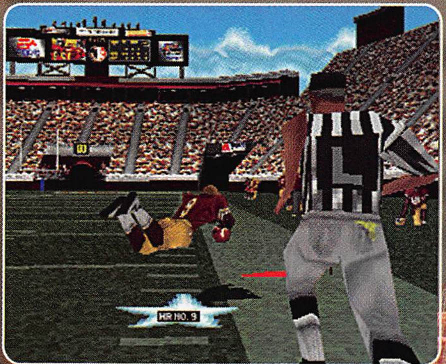
It's all in there; everything that made the '99 version shine is back... and in some cases better. Case in point: the Dynasty Mode. The feature that made last year's version the most engrossing sim out there just got deeper. Now, not only can you guide any one of your favorite teams through four seasons, you can create your own colleges and teams to add to the current NCAA Division I conferences. Choose the size of the school, style of stadium and team colors and name. Purists won't want to meddle too much with this, but think of the multi-player dynasty seasons you can create with your buddies; a fantastic addition.

Also, the recruiting mode has gotten more intricate. Last year's recruiting was a simplistic exercise requiring you to only send out the head coach in order to secure some blue chip players. This time around, recruiting takes place over five weeks and is broken down into wooing players which hail only from certain states that you have access to (depending on the size of your school and your football program). In other words, if you are a small school with an average team located in Maryland, don't expect to have access to players in Oregon. Only the Nebraskas and FSUs have that kinda reach. Players will complain that they want to stay close to home or play for a contender, so it will be up to you to work on them over the five weeks — and even then it isn't a definite.

The other improvements can be seen in the graphics. New player models make for a prettier gaming experience and the addition of over 100 new animations add to the realism (there are some great running back collision moves). There are also more teams (220 now), more plays and all of the bowl games. EA has also licensed the Heisman Trophy, so expect to see it in the year-end awards ceremony.

This is the game to beat, and it will be tough. The same fantastic gameplay coupled with better graphics and a deeper Dynasty Mode make for a very enjoyable football experience. A must have. **EN**



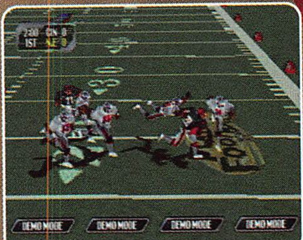


NFL Blitz 2000

PlayStation **P** Preview | Developer: Midway | Publisher: Midway | Available: Now | # of Players: 1-4

"All real Americans love the sting of battle. –Gen. G.S. Patton"







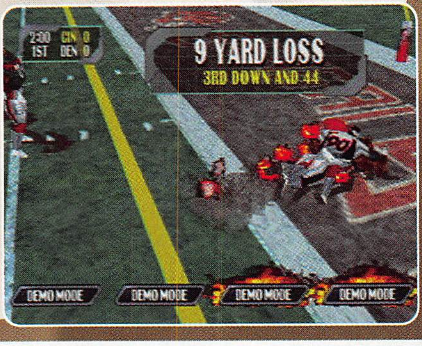
Most foreigners dismiss our obsession with football as a sign of our aggressive American tendencies. Every Sunday your girlfriend probably condemns it as barbaric (and then pouts as you tell her to get out of the way of the TV). I can only imagine what these nay-sayers think of a game like this. *NFL Blitz* is all about on-field violence; merciless pummeling at the hands of 300-pound, steroid-pumped, wrecking machines. It's everything a fourteen-year old boy could ever want.

Blitz is too much game to be contained on any one system, so Midway has planned the release on all three platforms. Obviously, the PlayStation version will have the most difficulty capturing the essence that is the coin-op, but it is clear, from this alpha, that it will be impressive, nonetheless.

Blitz, for the uninitiated (if there still are any), is a 7-on-7 football war with no refs and no penalties. You get four downs to get 30 yards and running plays are not part of the game plan. Excess is everything, so the hits are big, the money plays bigger, and late hits and smack talk are encouraged. This is pure arcade action, so simheads need not apply.

To this point, the game looks to be a solid reproduction, although the frame rate is lower, and the players move a bit slower. Gameplay, which is *Blitz's* strongest point, remains intact. The option to create your own plays is still included, as well as a Tournament Mode and Season Mode. All of the arcade codes will work on the home version.

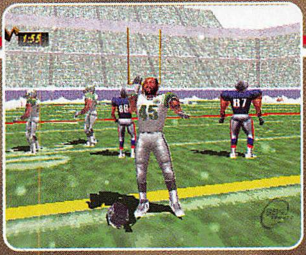
For arcade action, *NFL Blitz 2000* will deliver. For those of you who won't have the option to play this title on the N64 or Dreamcast, you can still expect a whoppin' good time. **EN**



NFL Xtreme 2000

PlayStation **P** Preview | Developer: 989 Studios | Publisher: 989 Studios | Available: Fall | # of Players: 1-8

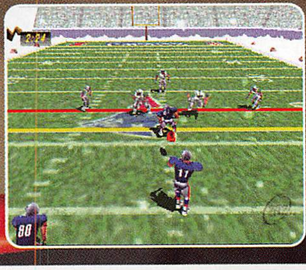
"...see your enemies driven before you..."











Last year 989 Studios decided to try and wrestle away some of Midway's *Blitz* audience with *NFL Xtreme*. While the game was entertaining, it offered just more of the same and, frankly, didn't do it as well as its opposition. It's another year and 989 has been feverishly at work making *Xtreme 2* a bigger, badder behemoth of a football title.

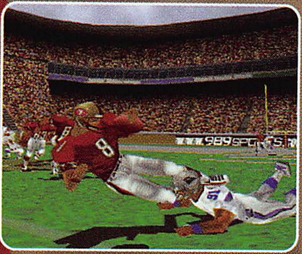
It looks like developers are on the right track. *Xtreme 2* can boast faster gameplay, better graphics and more of the stuff we love: bone-crunching hits and abusive trash talk. This 5-on-5 melee has the added bonus of thicker playbooks and the Cleveland Browns. It's true, the Brown are back and I couldn't be happier; bring the Dawg Pound to the field, baby!

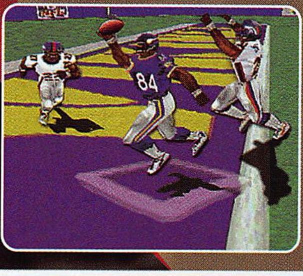
Don't expect the gameplay to have changed much. The mechanics of the game remain intact, although attention is being paid to toning down the money plays. The action remains fast and open, although the use of only five players hinders as much as it helps. That shouldn't come as a surprise.

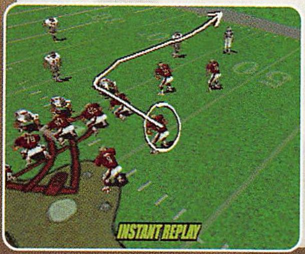
The fact remains that you are either an *Xtreme* man or a *Blitz* man. Don't expect enough of a change over last year's version to warrant a conversion — on the part of either game. Just know that you will still have a choice when it comes to arcade football barbarism. The American way. **EN**

NFL GameDay 2000









PlayStation | P Preview | Developer: 989 Studios | Publisher: 989 Studios | Available: Sept. | # of Players: 1-8

Can you smell it? It hangs in the air like some sweet, familiar scent. Can you feel it? That same air is crackling with electricity. Set up your fantasy teams, kiss your girlfriend goodbye (assuming you still have one after last season), and brush off the recliner; the next two dozen weeks belong to Howie, Madden, Terry, and Brown. Football is back, and with it, the newest *GameDay* title.

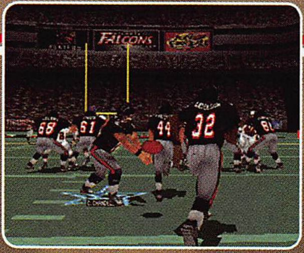
Every year developers say they are "taking the game to the next level." Well, most of that is just lame hyperbole, but at least you can count on enough improvements to warrant another look. 989 Studios has been hard at work making their popular pigskin title even better.

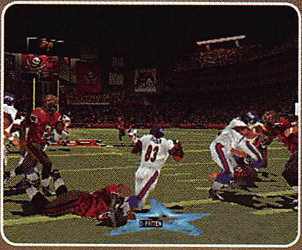
Every aspect of the game has been given a tune-up. For starters, you will notice new player models and motion capture. The Browns are back, the Oilers are now the Titans and a free-floating camera will allow you to view the game from any vantage point. The additions of nuances, such as cut blocks and more player-specific moves will make for a more realistic and hopefully more enjoyable game.

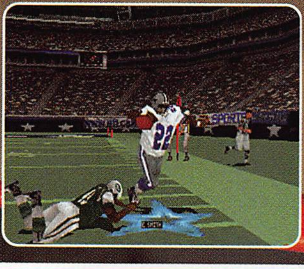
Not only is imitation the sincerest form of flattery, it is an absolutely necessity in the video game world. 989 Studios knows this and has acted accordingly. Last year, the battle of the best pro football sim went to EA's *Madden* because it had two things that *GameDay* did not: a dynasty mode and the ability to carry over the college players (from *NCAA Football 99*) into the *NFL* draft. Both were brilliant additions, which made for much deeper gameplay. This year, *GameDay 2000* will also include those features, making it a much more dynamic game.

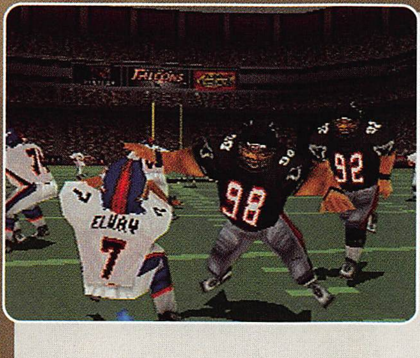
Many other small additions will also make for a better game, such as deeper stats, custom playbooks, the ability to make custom plays, all past Super Bowl teams, and a GM mode. When coupled with *GameDay's* impressive game engine and playability, this should make for one super sim. EN

Madden 2000











PlayStation | P Preview | Developer: EA | Publisher: EA Sports | Available: Sept. | # of Players: 1-8

The granddaddy of football sims is entering its umpteenth season and hopefully has the stuff needed to make the newest installment worth getting excited about (something that is getting more and more difficult in the 32-bit sports world).

Like *GameDay*, work has been done on the player models, scaling them accordingly to the size they are, in proportion, with the others on the field. Linemen are bigger, safeties are smaller and Randy Moss is just damn tall.

Since franchise mode was already in last year's version, all that could be done with it was to make it more in-depth. It has. There are more stat records, the ability to have more users and a better draft. Very nice.

More improvement has been done on the commentary, making it easier on the ear and helping with overall ambiance; ambiance is always good.

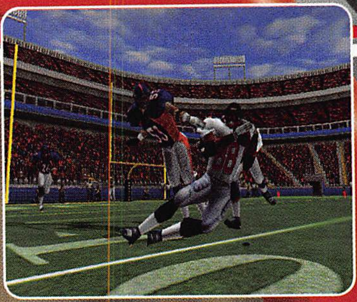
What worried me about *Madden 99*, though, is still a question mark for *2000*: How does the game play? While still a solid game, I thought that *Madden 99* had lost a step in that department, relinquishing its place at the top of the football pile to little brother, *NCAA Football 99*. The running game is what needed to be addressed. Let's hope it was. Let's face it, all the features in the world won't make gamers forget about that.

Madden 2000 will also be available on the Nintendo 64. **EN**

Sega NFL 2000

*TENTATIVE TITLE

"It is imperative that you buy this machine..."



Dreamcast

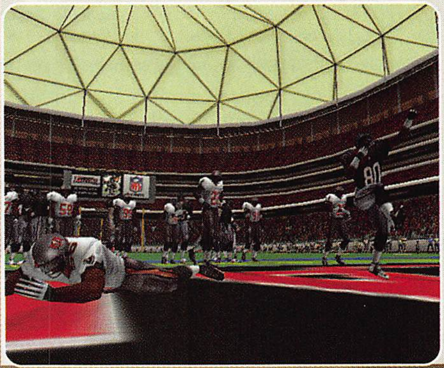
Developer: Visual Concepts **Available: Sep. 9th**
Publisher: Sega **# of Players: 1-4**

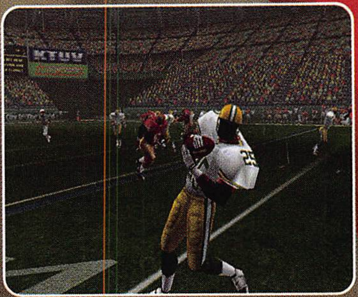
P Preview

Like a set of Promethean shackles, my jaded gamer status had dragged me down; made me listless and, dare I say, threatened to turn me off from all sort of sports fare. Jubilation! The shackles have been broken and I can once again froth rabidly over a new sports title. I haven't been this excited for a sports title since the anticipation over *NHL 94* had me climbing the walls of my frat house [Go Chi Psi!].

Visual Concepts, who made a less-than-stellar impact with such (highly underrated) titles as *One* and *NBA Fastbreak '98*, have exploded onto the Dreamcast scene with what is arguably the best sports title **ever**, and the crown jewel in the Dreamcast's US launch. *NFL 2000* works the type of gaming magic I didn't even *think* was possible. It's about time these wizards got their just due.

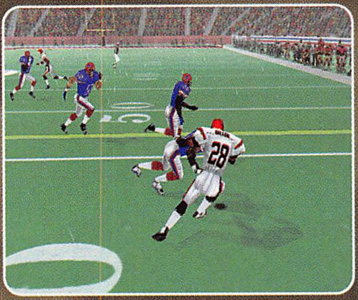
"I'd like you to meet the new kings of the football sim"





Graphics: You can't talk about this title without first mentioning the graphics. Looking at *NFL 2000* you'd think the Lord himself had a hand in the creation of the visuals; simply gorgeous. A laborious mo-cap schedule produced over 1,700 individual moves! At a quick glance, this game looks and moves like the real thing.

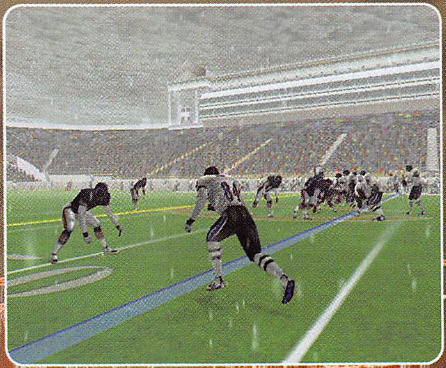
All Dreamcast games look great, though, and it isn't graphics that gamers are seeking; it's gameplay. *NFL 2000* is sure to deliver. Talking with producers I was excited to learn that these guys are committed to the task of getting every little iota of football nuance in there. Their own harshest critics, these guys were agonizing over every little thing, making sure that no detail was left unnoticed. From smart crowds and a thick playbook to realistic weather conditions and some outrageously good AI, this game is juiced.



While it would be impossible to go through everything that is planned for, or already in, *NFL 2000*, I will just say that it will completely change your perceptions of, and expectations for, sports games to come. I'll dangle multiple contact points, perfect physics and dead-on collision detection in front of you, for teasers. When you see these things in action, you'll know why I'm so damn excited — and why it is imperative that you buy this machine. **EN**





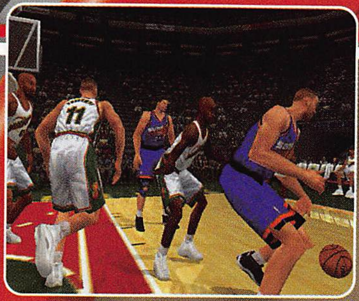




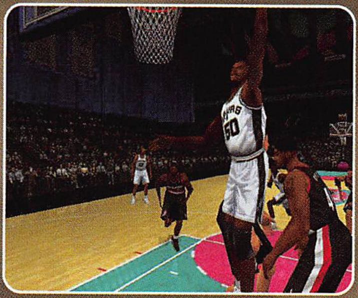
Sega NBA 2000

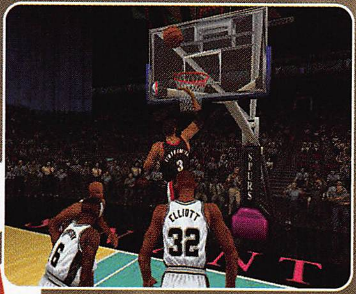
*TENTATIVE TITLE

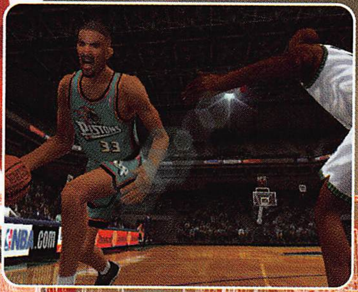
"...the true basketball fan's dream game..."











Dreamcast

Developer: Visual Concepts **Available: 4th Qtr.**
Publisher: Sega **# of Players: 1-4**

P Preview

Up until now, there has only been one true basketball sim: *NBA Live*. *ShootOut* and *In the Zone* have made attempts at besting the EA juggernaut, but to no avail. EA is opting not to enter the Dreamcast fray, so there will be no *Live* for Sega's new machine. Looking at this title, though, I don't think it will really matter. *NBA 2000* will reshape the basketball genre much like its sister opus, *NFL 2000*, will reshape the football genre.

NBA 2000 has fallen a bit behind *NFL 2000* in production, so don't expect it to make the September launch — they have no intention of rushing this game to stores. This may not be such a bad thing, though, because developers are intent on trying to get all of the rookies in, as well as making sure the rosters are correct (and the team names; we wouldn't want any Atlanta Magics floating around in the game, now would we?). The motion capture is taking a bit longer, too, and there are still many areas that need to be tweaked. Everything from rebounding and loose ball AI to the perfect foul-shot meter is being gone over.

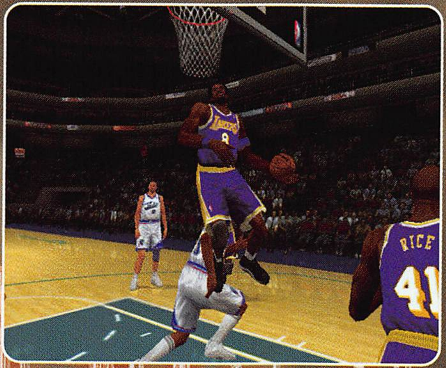
This will be the true basketball fan's dream game... when it's done. No facet of the game is being left out; no area of play beneath scrutiny. Crowds will leave if the game turns into a blow-out; animations can be stopped mid-stream, to facilitate responsive gameplay (super cancels, anyone?); every type of pass, shot and dunk will be available with which to dazzle the audience; each arena is a perfect facsimile of the real thing, all the way down to the rafters and seating arrangements.

"We still love this game!"

As I sat playing *NBA 2000*, I couldn't believe how solid the gameplay was. If I didn't know any better (and couldn't see), I'd have thought it was 16-bit, the way the players responded and how tight the control was; pure, blissful gameplay. Currently there are still some problems with certain moves and player AI, but rest assured, all will be fixed.

One of the absolute coolest extras is the commentary. It wasn't in the burn I played, but there will be a five-man commentary team. That's right, *five*, including a floor reporter (like Cheryl Miller, on NBC). If the sound quality is anywhere near as sweet as the visuals, then this commentary will blow the doors off that in *Triple Play*, *NHL 99* or *Live 99* — considered the best of the bunch (not to compare PSX to Dreamcast, but it's the only point of reference I've got, so back off).

Like I said in the *NFL 2000* preview, there is so much going on in this game — so many things you'll never see, that will be in there — that I can't possibly fit them onto a page. Just be satisfied, in the knowledge, that Visual Concepts is working overtime to make this the quintessential hoops sim. Just wait until their hockey sim is finished... **EN**

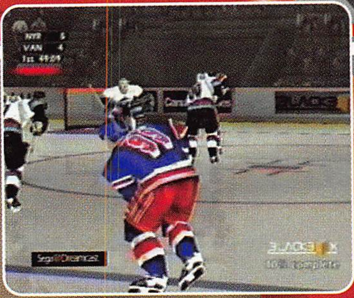




Sega NHL 2000

*TENTATIVE TITLE

"...Hockey, hockey, hockey, hockey..."



Dreamcast

Developer: Black Box **Available: 1st Qtr. 2000**
Publisher: Sega **# of Players: 1-4**

P Preview

"They jumped us... called us names...but Dave was there." "Dave's a killer!" "Dave's a mess..." Immortal lines preceding five of the funniest minutes in film history... to hockey fans. No, Black Box will *not* be bringing any *Slapshot* elements to *Sega Hockey*, but it seemed appropriate to start off the preview to what looks to be the best hockey game ever, with some lines from one of the best [hockey] comedies of all time.

This game is quite a ways off, folks, so I don't have much to offer beyond these tantalizing screenshots. The third game in VC's growing library of impressive 128-bit titles, *Sega Hockey* (obviously they can't call it *NHL 2000*, with EA already owning that name) looks like another triumphant sport sim. So, while we are scooping the competition with this preview, I am at a loss as to what I can tell you, other than the tape we saw of this game running gives me goosebumps.

So here it goes... an open letter to the developers. For this to be the greatest hockey game ever, there are certain areas that must be addressed. Feel free to use any of my ideas, as long as I get royalties and a chance to drive a Zamboni.

Obviously gameplay and AI are paramount. If you don't have these two, you don't have a game, so I will refrain from yammering on about them. What I want is realism and features. You're working with the Dreamcast, so those players better look and move like the real thing. On top of that, I want to see actual player faces, coaches, and refs. I want to see The Devil's (a.k.a. Don Koharski's) face on that striped body as well as Claude Lemieux's lecherous mug as he cheap-shots yet another unsuspecting player.

Give me a reason to play for The Cup. At the end of a successful bid, enable players to carve [type] their name into it, and have it include the team they did it with, as well as the record. Or maybe unlock Hall of Famers like Orr, Shore, and Howe. Goalies with no helmets, anyone?

I also want to see a beefy career mode with more stats than I know what to do with. The create-a-player must be deep and the ability to GM should be very intricate. I should also state that I want to see User Records that include things like "most goals ever scored in a game," "most penalty minutes," etc...

Speaking of penalties, I want fights — but not the type of useless fighting that hinders other games. I want fighting to happen for a reason and I want it to have repercussions. Allow players to crowd goalies and hit them. Make that the catalyst for a brawl. Give out suspensions and up the chances for an injury. If Domi or Probert has a hold of some cupcake, that guy should be going off ice, on a stretcher.

Make sure there are empty teams slots so people can create their own teams — and make sure you can set up mini-schedules for a smaller number of teams, so you can play through stat-tracked season's with only a couple of guys. This would be big on the fraternity house circuit.

O.K., the rant's over, but I hope Black Box gets the picture. It isn't just about the way the game plays — it's about catering to the way fans want to play the game. Forget the juicy options and you can forget about ever outclassing EA (and winning my heart). **EN**





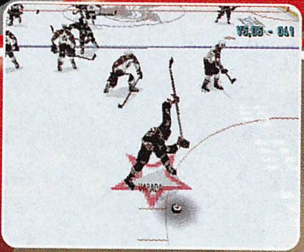








NHL 2000





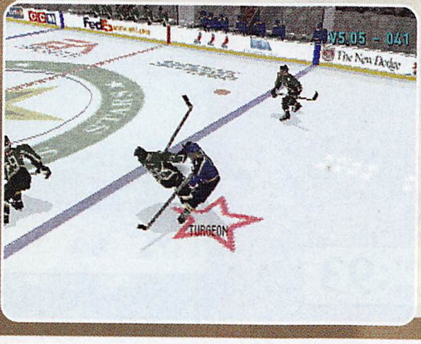


"The only place my Bruins ever win..."

PlayStation | Preview | Developer: EA | Publisher: EA Canada | Available: Fall | # of Players: 1-8

Nothin' better than a hockey sim, and there's no hockey sim quite like *NHL*. While we all harken back to the classic *NHL 94*, citing its unbelievable gameplay that only 16-bit could deliver, there is no doubt that the 32-bit installments have been nearing ever closer to that level of perfection.

There was many a nay-sayer last year, though — something which completely baffled me. People complained that the game played too slow and had a low frame-rate.



Please... the game rocked. This year's installment is even better than last. The tempo is faster, the play is a tad tighter, and the frame-rate has been boosted. Also, new play elements have been added to generate more game depth, such as a "Big Hit" button as well as a new deke feature.

One of the game's strongest elements remains the commentary. While play-by-play is still called by Jim Hughson, the color has been taken over by Bill Clement (bummer, I liked that other guy). One of the game's weakest elements, the fighting, remains anemic. It has a new interface, allowing for more pugilism, but don't expect it to be anything more than a distraction. EA needs to find a way to make it more instrumental.

The PlayStation version won't have that face-scan ability of the PC version (something that could be really cool for create-a-player), but it does have career mode and a fantasy draft, and that's all that matters. The career mode will implement a system that alters player's abilities as they age, making the game more realistic. As you get older, you'll lose a step, but maybe increase your offensive and defensive awareness. Free agency will also play a part.

Next to my Kings season tickets, this may be the one thing I look forward to the most this hockey season. **EN**

NHL FaceOff 2000







"Droppin' the gloves..."

PlayStation | Preview | Developer: 989 Studios | Publisher: 989 Studios | Available: Fall | # of Players: 1-8

I've made it no secret that I prefer *NHL* to *FaceOff*. I've also made no secret my obsession with hockey, which keeps me hungering for something new. For years I've watched the *FaceOff* franchise grow, and while it only bested *NHL* one year ('96), it has always remained a solid hockey sim.

Unlike *NHL 2000*, *FaceOff 2000* is still far from complete and many of the proposed features and improvements have yet to find their way into the game. For one, there will be the option to create and manage your



own team — from player drafts and free agency signings to custom offensive and defensive play settings and create-a-player. Not exactly a career mode, but it'll do.

The game will also contain a two-man commentary booth, utilizing the talents of Mike Emrick and Darren Pang. Dynamic cameras will also be included to maintain that look and feel of a real hockey telecast.

FaceOff 2000 is boasting the first ever on-ice motion captured moves. The purpose of this is to generate smoother, more realistic player animation, showcasing more of the nuances of hockey. *FaceOff* has always been a good-looking game, so I expect this to look great.

Then there's the I.C.E. AI™, or Intelligence Comprehension Execution Artificial Intelligence (don't these terms seem to get longer every year?). This verbose term is supposed to signify some intelligent and comprehensive player execution... Hey, wait a minute... Look for these guys to play the puck and the man just like the pros do!

My constant beef with *FaceOff* (and ultimately the reason for my relegating it to second) has been its gameplay. Not tight enough for me, but whether that gets fixed remains to be seen. We'll just have to wait and see. **EN**

Samurai Shodown 2

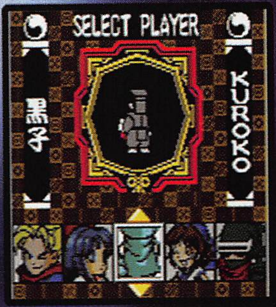
For those that don't know, I, Dangohead, am the biggest *Samurai Shodown* fan here at *GF*. I would also like to say that I'm the best *Samurai Shodown* player around... though, being a nice guy, I won't say such things [ed's note: nyuk, nyuk...]. And while *Samurai Shodown* for the Neo Geo Pocket was nice, *Samurai Shodown 2* for the Neo Geo Pocket Color blows away the original (in the same way *Samurai Shodown 2* was way better than the first one in the arcades).

Fourteen characters make up the lineup of this excellent fighter, including three fighters from *Samurai Shodown 64 II* <shudder>. Featuring gameplay elements from *Samurai Shodown 4* (the Bust and Slash modes, the combo system, etc.) and combining the speed and gameplay that made *Samurai Shodown 2* the best of the series (oh yes, definitely the best), this game should be more than enough for any *Samurai Shodown* fan. But SNK truly loves you and has included a card collection system. Meet certain requirements when playing a game (like defeating an opponent with a Super Move), and you'll get a card which can add offensive and defensive attributes to your stats, as well as new special moves!

There is no doubt that *Samurai Shodown 2* is the best fighting game on the NGPC, and I personally think it's the best game so far for SNK's wondrous handheld. *Samurai Shodown* fans have been waiting for a *SS* game on par with *Samurai Shodown 2* in the arcades, and now, they have it in the palm of their hands.

R REVIEW	Developer - SNK	1-2 Players	Viewpoint Score: 93
	Publisher - SNK	Available : Now	













Fatal Fury - First Contact

If there's one thing that SNK has an abundance of, it's fighting games. Sure, once in a while they may miss a step in their stride (<cough> *Samurai Shodown 64* <cough>), but in general, I always expect great fighting action with SNK. So it's not surprising that *Fatal Fury: First Contact* for the Neo Geo Color Pocket plays as it is expected to; great control, nice graphics, and cool original features.

Eleven characters (two brand, spanking, new ones), all with their own personalized moves, comprise the lineup, and every gamer will find one character which will fit them like a well-worn baseball mitt. And to keep up with the evolution of *Fatal Fury*, *FF:FC* combines the latest features of *Fatal Fury* (Break Shot, the H-S-P Power Meter, Evasion Attack) and adds two new features. First, you can now twist while jumping in the air, allowing you to escape attacks that would normally hit you out of the air. And when knocked down, use the Technical Rise to attack nearby opponents while getting up.

Good graphics and control, and the tried-and-true fighting formula of *Fatal Fury* make *Fatal Fury: First Contact* a great fighting game to have on the Neo Geo Pocket Color. While it might not be quite as good as *Samurai Shodown 2* on NGPC, *Fatal Fury* fans will not be disappointed.

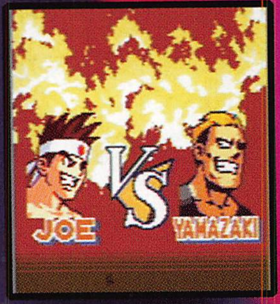
R REVIEW	Developer - SNK	1-2 Players	Viewpoint Score: 87
	Publisher - SNK	Available: Now	



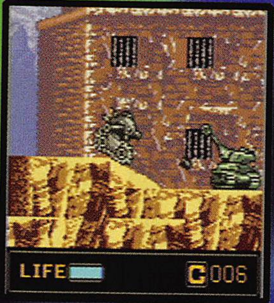




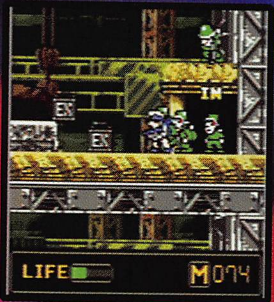


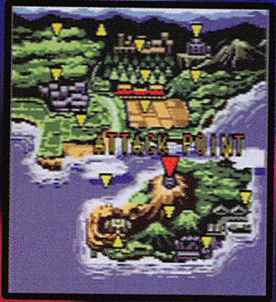




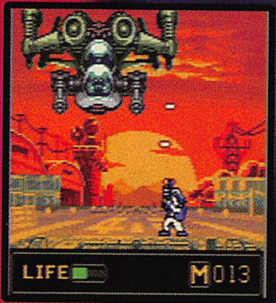












Metal Slug - First MIssion

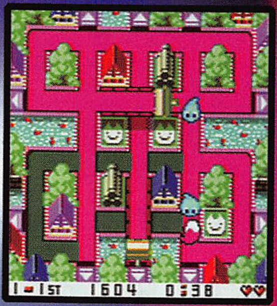
While there is some argument over who invented the side-scrolling action shooter genre (some say *Contra*, some say *Rush N' Attack*, and so on and so forth), there's little doubt that near the top of the totem pole, you'll find the *Metal Slug* series. Renowned for its excellent action, cool power-ups, fantastic animation, and wonderful personality, *Metal Slug* has always been popular in arcades. And now, SNK brings the arcade shooting-fest home to the Neo Geo Pocket Color.

Featuring 16 different missions, *Metal Slug: First Mission* plays pretty much like its arcade sibling, with a few gameplay changes. First off, the option button is used to toggle when you're using grenades or gun. This is a bit annoying at first, but it's not a tremendous handicap. The levels are much more intricate, in that, instead of pure linear action, you now can explore too. The music is a bit... archaic, and pales to the drumming marches of the arcade version. Lastly, there is no two-player mode in this game, but as ECM would say, "It's me against the world anyway!" (in that deranged, high-pitched voice of his).

All in all, *Metal Slug: First Mission* is a great action title for the Neo Geo Pocket Color. Great control, nice graphics, and the trademark *Metal Slug* personality — if you own a Neo Geo Pocket Color it would be a sin not to get this great game.

Viewpoint Score	:90	Developer - SNK	1 Player
		Publisher - SNK	Available: Now

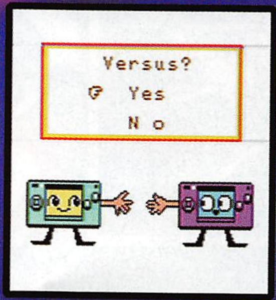
R REVIEW













Crush Roller

In the video game industry, there are a lot of ways to sell a title. Making the game a graphical feast to catch the eye is always popular. And then there's that wonderful tool we call marketing... But the best is to make a great game which plays well, is super addictive, and which simply sells itself through word of mouth. Such is the case with *Crush Roller* for the Neo Geo Pocket Color.

The gameplay is relatively simple. You are a paintbrush. Your job is to paint every nook and cranny of a neighborhood road. The obstacles? Cute, vicious monsters that chase you to the bitter end and pesky "irksters" who leave footprints on your painted path. Your weapons? A roller that allows you to "crush" the tadpole baddies (even though they return moving even faster). Playing very much like Pac-Man, the latter levels get pretty hard, and you'll find yourself crying whenever one of the enemies catches you. And there's nothing more frustrating than having to repaint a part of the road where Irksters have left their footprints. If it sounds like it's addicting, it is. If it sounds like *Crush Roller* is fun, it most definitely is. And if it sounds like you have to buy this game now, before finishing this review, you'd better go buy it NOW!

Viewpoint Score	:89	Developer - ADK	1-2 Players
		Publisher - SNK	Available: Now

R REVIEW

Japan Now!



I've been spouting the glories of this game for months now. It has been #1 in my Top Ten for the past year, dropping only once to the #2 spot. In my mind, it is the perfect arcade game for the hardcore arcade gamer. And now, with Internet head-to-head play planned, *Virtual On Oratorio Tangram* is coming to a Dreamcast this year.

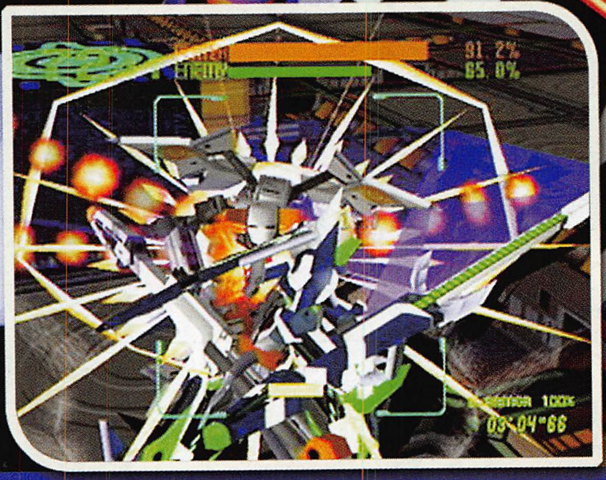
While *VOOT* is nearly non-existent in the US (six machines are scattered throughout the US, two of them unconfirmed), the game is still among the top arcade games in Japan. Similar to the first *Virtual On*, this one-on-one mech combat game outdoes the original by a landslide with added features(air dashing and virtual armor), new characters (like scythe-wielding Specineff and dragon-summoning Angelan), wonderful special effects, and elegantly complex gameplay.

Some say that this Model 3 Step 2 powerhouse would lose a lot of its visual splendor if Sega attempted a translation onto the Dreamcast. Well, after seeing the following exclusive screenshots of the DC version of *VOOT* that is still not complete, I have complete faith in Sega that the arcade port of this phenomenal game will be flawless (and trust me, I've played the arcade version to death).

As far as the online multi-player mode, Sega of Japan has revealed two modes of play that will be accessible online. First will be "Easy User" mode, which is the equivalent of a "pick up game" type style. The fights in Easy User mode are set for a time limit of 80 seconds, and best of three round wins. The other mode is "Heavy User" mode, designed for hardcore *VOOT* players (like yours truly). This mode enables an Options setting (for time limit and number of rounds), Stage Select, an Internet chat option, and a ranking system where you can compete in. This ranking system option comes with an up-to-date listing of the best players online.

There is no set date for release of *VOOT* on Dreamcast, other than "near the end of this year." But if you have a import Dreamcast and you're looking for what is possibly the greatest arcade game translation, the wait for *Virtual On Oratorio Tangram* for the Dreamcast doesn't seem too long at all. **Dangohead**



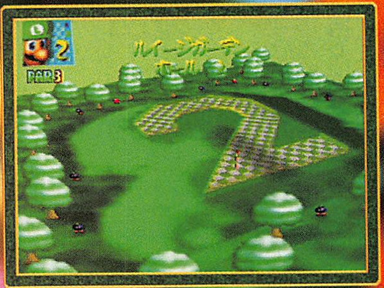



SELECT YOUR MACHINE
CYPHER
ANGELAN
HBV-502-H
RAIDEN
TEMJIN
PLAYER
ENEMY











In his nearly 20-year career, Mario's seemingly done it all. While the rest of us go about our typically mundane lives, Mario has (in no particular order): saved the world on no less than eight separate occasions (count 'em all!); refereed tennis matches; raced nitro-powered go-karts; earned a degree in medicine; gone on a journey through time (with Luigi on his tail); become heavyweight champ of the Nintendo universe; and even found time to teach some typing! Now things have finally come nearly full circle — apparently Mario and co. have finally found some time to rest between saving the world, and what better way to while away those days than a nice round of golf? Why it's been years since Mario's last outing on the sticks, with the halcyon days of *NES Golf* now but a dim, faded memory and the Visine-deprived world of *VB Golf* not counting for much. This time out, Camelot Software Planning has seen fit (under the big N's considerable auspices) to bring their much-heralded *Hot Shots Golf* to the N64 under the new name of (über-creativity time) *Mario Golf*.

So what exactly does that mean? Well, quite simply, it means that the developer of such games as *Beyond the Beyond* (shudder with me) and *Shining Force 3* has brought their biggest hit ever to the house that Mario built. Best yet, it's probably the number one sports game available on the N64 (*All-Star Baseball* who?!). But that's review-talk — for the time being you're going to have to sate your hunger on this brief preview and get ready for the blow-out (based on the domestic rev) coming next month (yes, that's right, ECM will write a sports review next month... the Four Horsemen shouldn't be far behind).

Essentially if you've played the remarkable *Hot Shots*, you've played *Mario Golf*... with the standard Nintendo twist. Hit the links with Mario, Luigi (yep, the has-been is onboard), Peach (the Princess to us 'old school' gamers), Bowser, etc. for a day, on one of three courses (including some mini-golf!). Prepare to unlock all manner of 'hidden' characters as well as lose your life to, well... golf (yeah, I know, I can't believe it either).

For now, feast your eyes on a bevy of new screens and prepare yourself for what may prove to be the best game I've yet played this year — I can hear Eggo calling the sanitarium right now. Till next month, I'll be hitting Mushroom Beach for a little R&R, Mario-style! **ECM**

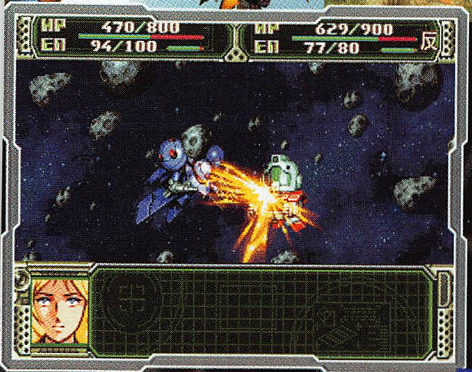




ECM: It's-a me... ECM!	Developer - Camelot	1-4 Players
	Publisher - Nintendo	Available Now Japan

PREVIEW





スーパーロボット大戦 コンプリートボックス

SUPER ROBOT WARS COMPLETE BOX

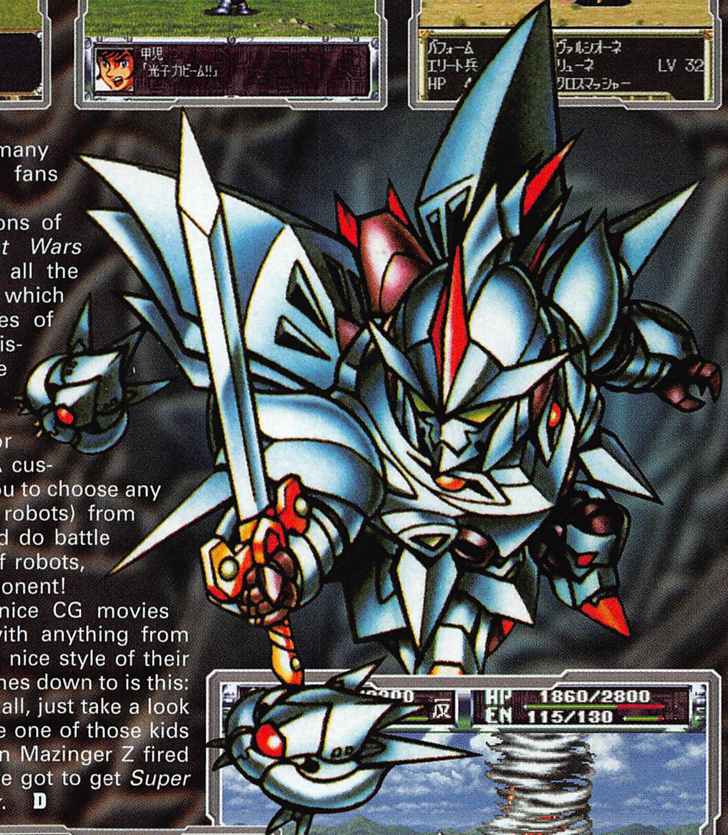




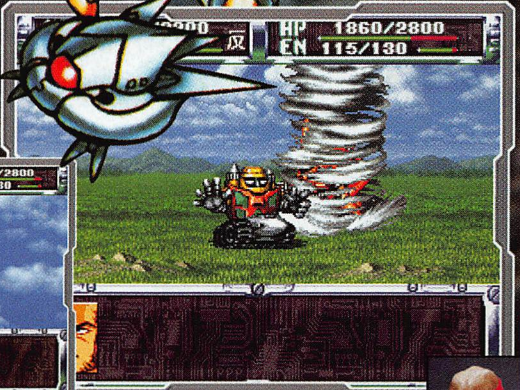


There are a lot of import games that don't make it to the U.S... and for good reason. Those who think every Japanese game should be ported to the U.S. should play the likes of *Cooking Fighter*, *Dance! Dance! Dance!*, and *Seaman* (hmm, now there's a concept... a talking fish game). Still, there are a few gems that, for some reason or another, never made it over here... and the *Super Robot Wars* series is one of them. Influenced by watching cool robot anime ever since I was a wee dango, I realize *Super Robot Wars* may not be the deepest strategy game out there, but it certainly wins points for style, fun, and the all-important reminiscing factor. Ahh, the young days of afterschool *Tranzor Z* (AKA *Mazinger Z*)... And after countless titles, Banpresto comes out with another jewel of a *Super Robot Wars* title on the PSX. And while I don't like the PS versions of *Super Robots Wars*, there is so much stuff in *Super Robot Wars Complete Box*, that any fan of the *SRW* series MUST get this title.

Gameplay-wise, *SRW Complete Box* holds revamped versions of *Super Robot Wars 2* (SFC), *Super Robot Wars 3* (SFC), and *Super Robot Wars EX* (SFC). The story and gameplay remain true to the original versions, but the graphics are on par with the most recent *SRW — Super Robot Wars F Complete*. Sure, the three-frames-at-most animation is far from jaw-dropping, but the point of *SRW* is not the graphics, but the novelty of being able to play Mazinger Z, Getta Robo, Zeta Gundam, and other legendary robots of anime lore. Gameplay remains in its original form: turn-based combat, which has changed very little since the first *Super Robot Wars* (nearly 10 years ago). This tried-and-true formula guarantees that only the hard-core *SRW* fans will own this game. And to make it more tantalizing, *Super Robot Wars CB* comes with so many extras, even non-*SRW* fans might take up this title.



Besides renewed versions of the three *Super Robot Wars* games, *SRWCB* contains all the original soundtrack music, which consists of all the themes of each anime robot. A full history, as well as an entire pilot background round-up from all three *SRW* games is also listed for your reading pleasure. A custom battle mode allows you to choose any robots (including enemy robots) from the three *SRW* games and do battle with either a CPU team of robots, or a second human opponent! Finally, there are some nice CG movies that, while not on par with anything from Namco or Square, have a nice style of their own. Basically what it comes down to is this: if you're not a *SRW* fan at all, just take a look at this game. But if you're one of those kids who still remembers when Mazinger Z fired his "Breast Fire," you have got to get *Super Robot Wars Complete Box*. **D**



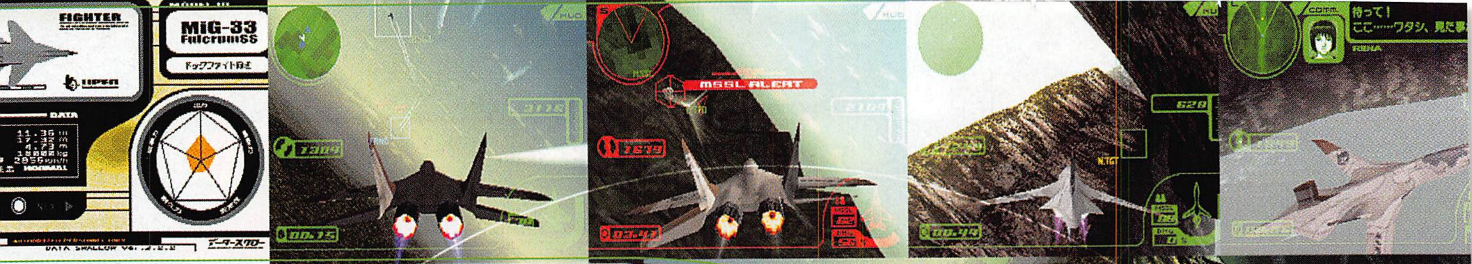






VIEWPOINT SCORE: 88	DEVELOPER - WINKY SOFT	1-2 PLAYERS	DANGOHEAD: NOW, WHERE ARE MY *VOOT* ROBOTS IN *SRW*???
	PUBLISHER - BANPRESTO	AVAILABLE NOW JAPAN	

R REVIEW



Namco's *Ace Combat* has been the single most popular flight simulation/arcade series since the PlayStation's inception. Admittedly, the PlayStation hasn't seen many games in this genre; and the likes of *Agile Warrior* and *Warhawk* never matched the quality of *Ace Combat*. Now, *Ace Combat 3* has all the markings of a solid aerial fighter — as it should, because two years is more than enough time to design a fitting sequel.

Whereas the first two games in this series, *Air Combat* and *Ace Combat 2*, had only real warplanes (with the possible exception of the XFA-27), *AC3* features the old planes we're used to and fictional ones. As out of place as it may seem, there is a story here as well. Between the soap opera and the Namco-invented aircraft, this chapter in the *Ace Combat* saga resembles an episode of *Robotech* more than anything else... sans Veritechs, of course.

But those aren't the only changes in *AC3*; everything from the heads-up display to the terrain is much improved. Gone is that ugly HUD from *AC2* which looks circa 1980. In is a new free-roaming view function. By moving the right analog stick in

ACE COMBAT 3® electrosphere



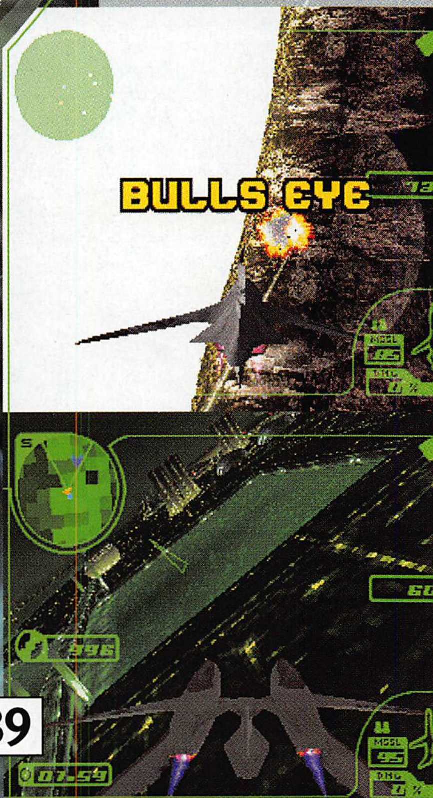
any direction, you can see what is going on in that area of the playfield. Plus, pressing the button down gives a rear view — perfect for when a missile is about to connect. This new feature adds an unheard of depth to dogfights and aerial strikes.

A total of 20 fighters are available to fly in over 50 missions. The operations assigned depend on which difficulty you select and the path you choose when given multiple choices. Branching increases the longevity of the game, particularly if you plan on playing through every mission.

The gameplay is *Ace Combat* through and through... Tailing a stealth bomber in a narrow canyon at supersonic speeds gives you an exhilarating sense of speed. Mission upon mission, the pace escalates from standard fare to hellish proportions.

Surprisingly, the tuneage is completely different from *AC2*. Hard rockin' tunes have now been replaced with trendy electronica. And while *AC3*'s music isn't bad, I prefer blasting MIGs to the sound of guitars, not synthesizers.

I'm not a huge fan of flight simulators; but *Ace Combat* is the exception to this rule. The locales are breathtaking and the warplane models are authentic down to the ailerons and flaps. I only have two gripes with the game: The vanishing point and depth-cueing, while taxing the PlayStation to its limits, are still not perfect. Simultaneously pitching and rolling simply aren't responsive enough. Minor flaws aside, this title re-affirms Namco's PlayStation programming skills. Whether *Ace Combat 3* is a purchase or import rental depends entirely on you. As for me, I'll be playing this puppy for a long time to come.



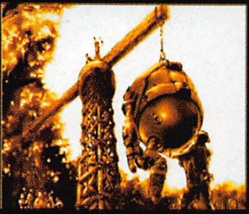
Cerberus gets carsick while commuting from Orange County on a daily basis and has never actually flown.

under construction R REVIEW	CERBERUS: TARGET ACQUIRED: BULL'S EYE!	DEVELOPER - NAMCO PUBLISHER - NAMCO	1 PLAYER AVAILABLE NOW JAPAN	VIEWPOINT SCORE :89

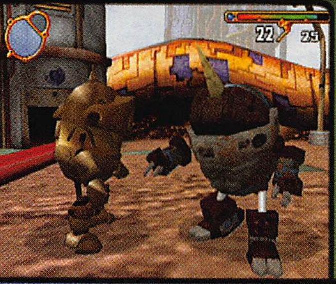
EGG
ELEMENTAL GIMMICK GEAR

We all know someone like *E.G.G.* — someone that was pushed through high school (and probably college) despite the misgivings of teachers, parents, friends, pets, etc.; somebody that never should have escaped the tenth grade (hopelessly mired somewhere between American history and algebra). That's *Elemental Gimmick Gear* in an eggshell, the latest DC game from Hudson that 'graduated' from Saturn development under less-than-auspicious circumstances.













So let's say you're a console developer that's sunk a sizable amount of development time and money into a project only to see its target platform go up in a puff of smoke; in this case, Saturn. It's happened countless times in the history of console gaming; hell, there's a whole library of 32X games that **never** saw the light of day outside Sega of America (what I wouldn't do for a copy of *Virtua Hamster*, *X-Men* or *Mud Kicker* <sigh>). On occasion, however, taking a game that might have been pretty cool on one platform and 'upgrading' it for another is not always the best move — sorta like taking a classic B&W film (*Psycho* for instance) and upgrading it for 'today's audiences' (the same people that enjoy 'classics' like *The Waterboy* — Adam Sandler: misunderstood comic genius or borderline retarded?).

The title refers to a clockwork-style robotic defender of the world that is out to right the wrongs that humanity has inflicted on the virgin earth. OK, that's a bit of an oversimplification but it'll suffice. Taking the role of Leon, the pilot of one of these E.G.G.s (perhaps even the *original* E.G.G.) he's out on a quest to save the environment and discover his true identity. Gameplay is somewhat enjoyable as you trek around adding new 'gimmicks' to your 'gear, but it gets monotonous very quickly.

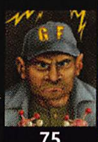
Graphically speaking, the game features very nicely *hand-drawn* locales for the various characters to interact with; it's easily the best part of the game. The characters themselves are, <sigh>, rendered sprites with not nearly enough animation — get ready for lots of the two-frame shuffle, I'm afraid. In fact, it looks as if the game would fit quite easily on a PlayStation given its limited frame rate (sadly for the DC, *Saga Frontier 2* and *Legend of Mana* are better looking games). The only aspect that even scratches the surface of the DC is the certain battle sequences against major characters that take place in 3D arenas. While they're clean and move at a decent clip, it's certainly nothing to get really worked up over.

When it all comes down to it, *E.G.G.* fits firmly in the mold of a game that should have stayed in Saturn limbo, or worst case, been shifted over to PlayStation to languish with a legion of other sub-par titles — there's no need to pollute a console in dire need of killer apps with something as rotten as this egg. Save your bucks. After all, *Climax Landers* is right around the corner... **ECM**

ECM often wonders what would happen if he put this E.G.G. in the microwave.

Viewpoint Score	:79	Developer - Hudson	1 Player	ECM: My E.G.G.s
		Publisher - Hudson	Available Now Japan	are runny...

REVIEW









The Arcade Academy Awards

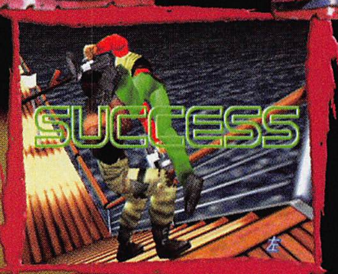
"... and the first inductees into the arcade board hall of fame are: Capcom's CPS-2 for providing the gamer with countless fireballs and dragon punches, and reinvigorated a stagnant arcade market; SNK's NeoGeo for its stunning longevity and contributing titles such as *Metal Slug*, *King of Fighters* and *Samurai Shodown* to the hard-core gamers of the world; and perhaps most importantly, Sega's Model 2 family of boards: from 2A-2C that brought the world the likes of *Daytona USA*, *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Virtual On!* and *Dead or Alive* among a legion of other incredible titles that helped define 3D gaming as the world now knows it."

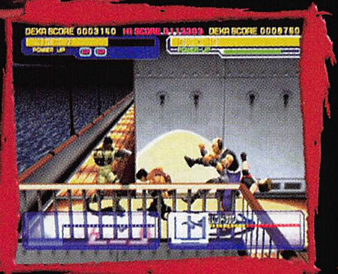


It's Dyn-A-Mite!

Yep, Sega's Model 2 board has played host to some of the best gaming experiences the world has ever seen, but that sadly ended recently as Model 2 was finally put out to pasture after the completion of Sega's *Dynamite Deka 2*, the 'sequel' to *Die Hard Arcade* in the US (which put in an appearance as Sega's only US-released ST-V Saturn hardware-based hit). However, in an effort to bolster the stuttering DC line-up in Japan (shortly before a veritable flood of amazing games), Sega saw fit to port this very solid beat-'em-up to the consumer market with a legion of enhancements.









For those of you unfamiliar with Sega's *Dynamite Deka* series of games (shame on you!) all you really need to know is that they're the spiritual descendants of games like *Double Dragon*, *Final Fight* and *Streets of Rage 2*. Take the controls of one of three different super-cops out to save a cruise ship from the evil machinations of a band of modern-day pirates out to take hostages and generally make a nuisance of themselves — think of it as the video game version of *Speed 2*... but good.

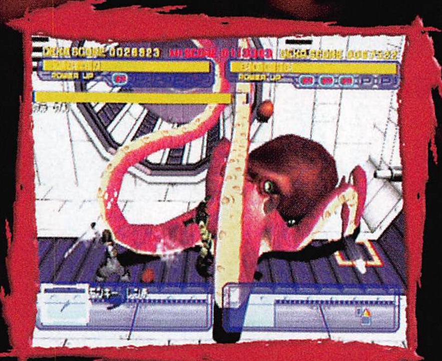


Kick, Punch, it's all in the mind!

So the story lacks originality and we've all played this type of game, ad nauseum, in the past. Ah, but when was the last time you enjoyed it (*Fighting Force*? Ha!)?

R REVIEW	ECM: Living in a reconstructive surgeon's paradise	Developer - Sega Publisher - Sega	1-2 Players Available Now Japan	Viewpoint Score :90







And that's one thing this game has going for it in shattered teeth and bruised ribs: it's amazingly fun and completely mindless. Maneuver through room after room choked with bloodthirsty pirates, punching, kicking and breaking them every step of the way. Armed with a literal arsenal of moves that would humble any three schools of martial arts combined, with multi-hold throws that would make King green with envy.

Kick, Punch, Repeat

OK, so inherently this type of game is a bit repetitive. However, with a legion of strikes, throws and grapples, the variety of ways with which you can render an opponent completely broken is staggering. While each of the initial missions only lasts about 25 minutes, those of you that are into mindless, *Double Dragon*-esque side-scrolling brawling action will be right at home.

DYNAMITE DEKA 2 ダイナマイト刑事

Call 911

For those of you that never experienced the likes of *Double Dragon*, *Final Fight* or any of its various ilk, *DD2* is a must-play. For those of you that yearn for a time when simpler, more kinetic games were the rule and not the exception, this game is a must play. For those of you so horrifically jaded over the past three or four years, this game is a must play — just to remind you that a game doesn't have to be monumentally deep, feature a shotgun-toting super-hero, or play host to some cute little abomination as he spreads good cheer and joy across a world of pastels and floating platforms. Nope, this game is all about how quickly you can send the nearest miscreant to an unhappy, fracture-filled end.

Extra! Extra! Bleed all about it!

So what does *Dynamite Deka 2* offer beyond the standard missions? Let's just say that this game has been completely Namco'ed. "Namco'ed?!" you ask, "what's that?" It's when a company takes a game that originated in the arcade and adds all manner of bells, whistles and enhancements to extend replayability and increase the hard-working gamer's bang-for-a-buck. And herein Sega went way over and above the call of duty.

For starters, as is pretty much standard issue these days (thanks again, Namco), there's the inclusion of all-new rendered cut-scenes that were never a part of the Model 2C original. Only problem with little 'bonuses' like this is that if you're going to go down this path, it'd be nice to see some effort put into them. See, *DD2DC* (whoa!) is home to some of the most broken renders you're ever likely to lay eyes on. In fact, the little girl you wind up rescuing at the end of each of the initial 3 missions is so heinous looking that you're wont to wonder why exactly the Dynamite Cops are risking life and limb to save such a troglodyte (here comes the hate mail). Letting Hiroyuki, the janitor at Sega of Japan, do your renders on off-hours probably wasn't the best move.



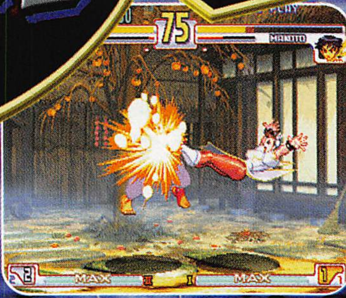
It's not all bleak, though, as Sega also included a set of all-new gameplay modes to make sure they squeeze every ounce of play outta the original. After completing the first 3 missions, you'll unlock missions 4-6, each of which, while they're exactly the same graphically, offers a different play mode. For example, mission 4 is a one-man battle through the entire first mission — sans continues and extra lives.

These are just a sampling of the little 'extras' that go a long way to show that Sega is willing to put in a little extra effort to make their games more of a 'must-have' than they would otherwise be.

ECM spends long hours tormenting his underlings, quickly calling "All editorial staff to the conference room" when one of his myriad of action figures is even a millimeter out of place.

3rd STRIKE
STREET FIGHTER III





Street Fighter has been and continues to be the longest running fighting game franchise. This statement holds even more truth if the original *Street Fighter*, released in 1987, is jumbled in with its many, many sequels. It took Capcom four long years to develop a second chapter (*Street Fighter II*) in the *Street Fighter* series. And it was another six years until *Street Fighter III* landed in arcades across the nation. Capcom released a multitude of *Street Fighter*-derived games in the interim. These include *Champion Edition, Super Street Fighter II, Street Fighter: The Movie*, the *EX* series, the *Alpha* series and, to a lesser degree, the *Vs.* series. Suffice it to say *SF* has had a very respectable career.

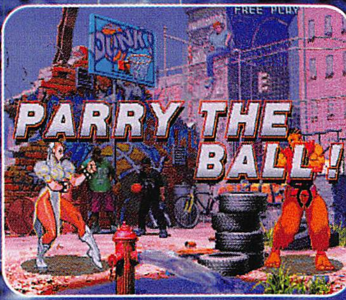
Released in spring of '97, *Street Fighter III* hit arcades with much anticipation. As popular as it was, *SFIII* still felt some heat from detractors. Players whined about unfair parrying, high-damage combos, and Oro's Tengu Stone, among other things. Some of the flaws in *SFIII* were alleviated in *Street Fighter III: Second Impact*. This new installment segregated the twins, Yun and Yang, and added two new characters Hugo, from the *Final Fight* universe, and Urien. Akuma also was a playable fighter. Even in its new state the game was still not perfect. More than a year later, Capcom issues yet another upgrade, *Street Fighter III: Third Strike*.

Third time's the charm, or so it goes... this being the third installment of *Street Fighter Three*. *SFIII: Third Strike* introduces four new characters: Remy, a french Guile clone; Q, a masked man with a trench coat; Twelve, an amorphous Russian experiment; and Makoto, a Japanese female judo master. Only rumored to have been in *Second Impact*, Chun Li finally makes her debut in *Third Strike*. Q and Twelve are the least exciting of the new challengers. Makoto and Remy are very charming characters, and I'm sure they'll be very popular. Chun Li is totally new; and even though very few of her attacks have been carried over from previous games, she's as effective as ever.

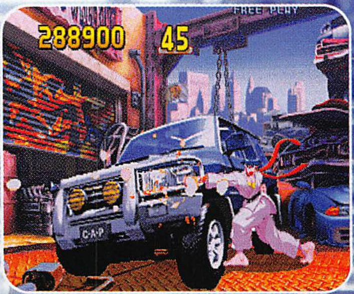
Turtle (tur't'l) n., 1. any of a large and widely distributed order of land, freshwater, and saltwater reptiles having a toothless beak and a soft body encased in a hard shell. 2. A person who plays fighting games (particularly *Street Fighter*) with defensive, reaction-based tactics.

The Parry system makes *SFIII* a turtle-fest. It's not uncommon for opposing players to jump in and not attack anticipating that you'll attack. When, and if you do attack, your opponent will Parry your attack and counter accordingly. Game speed has been increased, but players in general adjust and still parry too frequently.

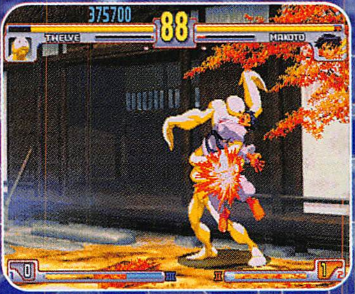
Playing *SFIII: Third Strike* in a non-tournament environment is extremely fun. Everything about the game is top-notch from the liquid smooth animation to the new Super Arts techniques. Even crystal clear pictures don't do the animation justice. It's something you need to see on your own. I'm a huge fan of *SF*, but *SFIII* never did it for me... until now, that is. *Third Strike* is just what I've been waiting for. **Cerberus**

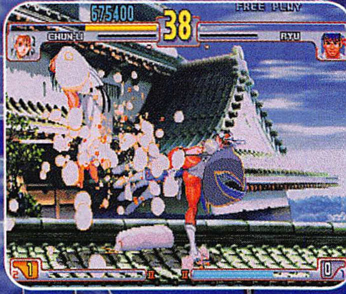




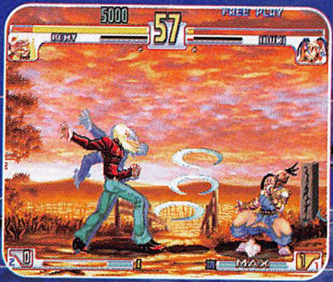


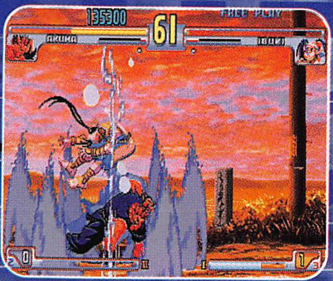




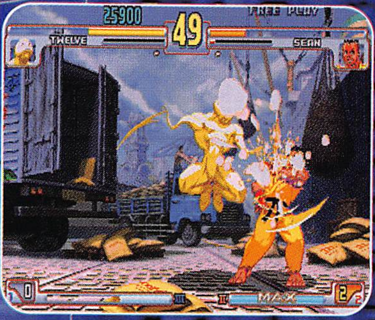


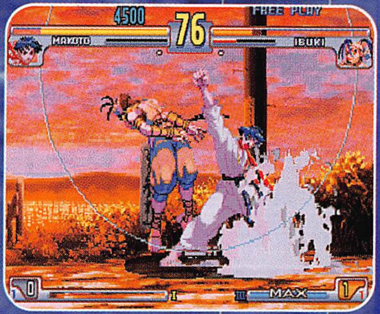












Okay, we've got Ryu, Ken, and Chun Li... Where's Guile and Cammy?

Much of the control schematics have changed since *Second Impact*. Just like *Street Fighter Alpha 3* redesigned throws, rolls, and such... so has *Third Strike*.

High Jump—Press DOWN, UP on the stick to perform a jump with more height to it.

Super Arts—Only one Super Arts can be used at a time. When the Super gauge has been completely filled you can perform a Super Arts. The left fractional number is your maximum possible Super Arts; the right fractional number is the amount you currently have.

EX Special Moves—EX Special moves are powered-up special attacks. Press two attack buttons when you perform a special attack such as a Hadoken to amp up its attack power. The Super Arts gauge must be flashing to perform an EX attack. Some special attacks cannot be Ex-ed, nor can Akuma perform any EX attacks.

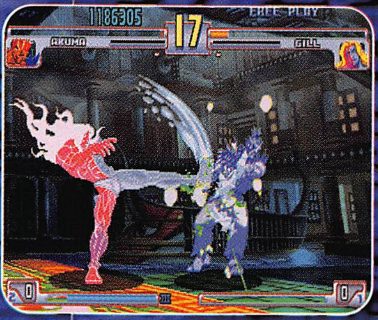
Throw and Grabs — To toss your opponent (much like Eggo tosses his cookies), press Jab Punch and Short Kick simultaneously. Pressing the stick LEFT or RIGHT will change the throw animation. This same command can be used to counter being thrown.

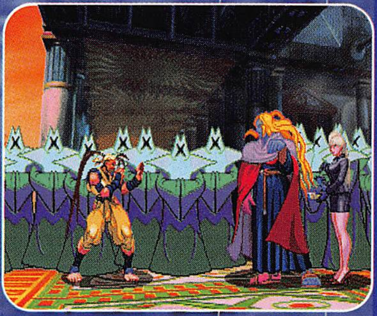
Leap Attacks — Also known as overhead attacks — these attacks require that you block high. Press Strong Punch and Forward Kick simultaneously.

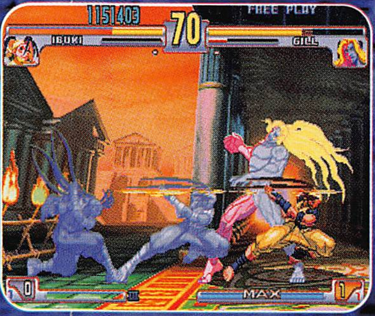
Taunts — Nothing beats connecting with a super and taunting your opponent. Press Fierce Punch and Roundhouse Kick simultaneously to mock your opponent. This also charges up the Super Arts gauge.

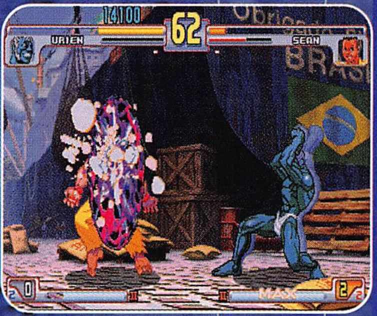
Parrying — The bread and butter of *SFIII*; perform a parry to counter an attack or take no block damage from a special or super arts technique. Press FORWARD while standing to Parry a high attack. Press DOWN while standing to Parry a low attack. Press FORWARD while airborne to Parry.

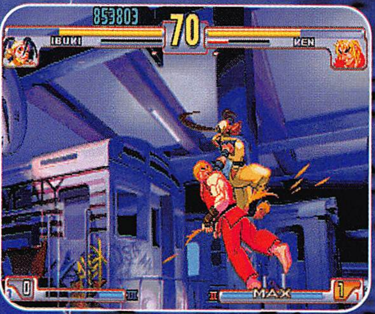
Everything about the game is top-notch, from the liquid smooth animation to the new Super Arts techniques

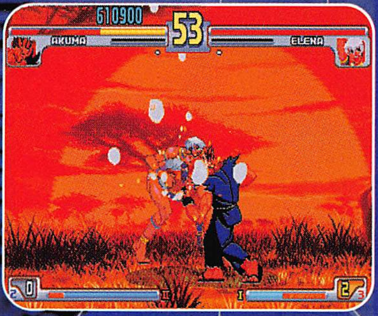


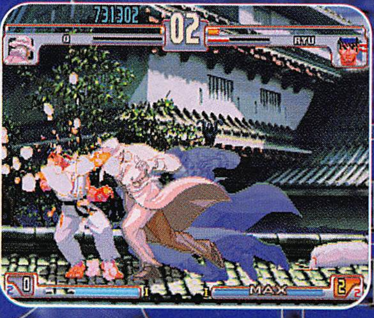


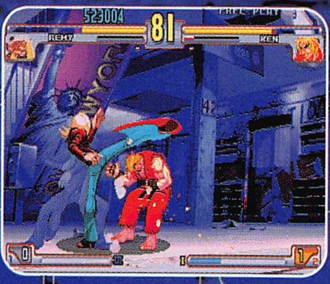


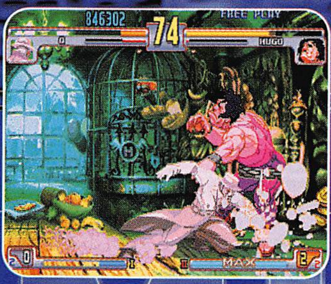


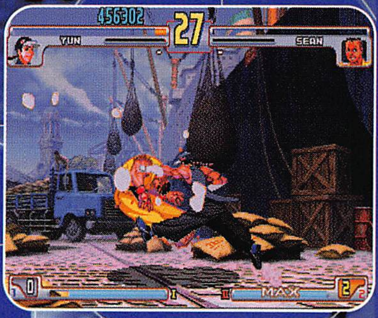






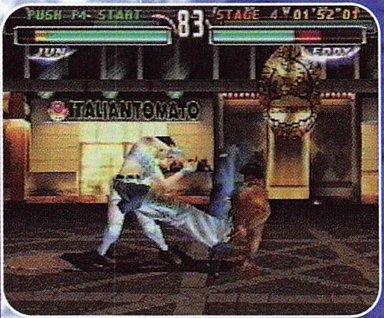


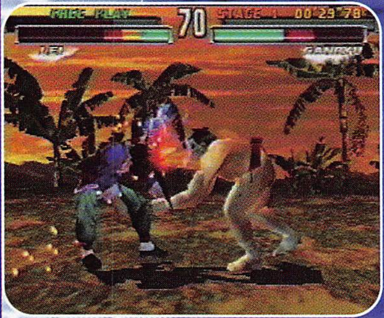




QUARTER CRUNCHERS

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT









Even after some superb PlayStation translations, the *Tekken* series still draws a crowd in arcades. With flashy special moves, easy controls, and spectacular combos, *Tekken* has grown to become the favorite arcade fighting game for many a gamer. And for those who haven't had their fill of *Tekken* yet, Namco loves you a whole lot... because *Tekken Tag Tournament* is here!

Boasting over 30 playable characters and a "who knows" amount of secret characters, the reason for the name is the "Tag feature" in the game (a borrowed idea from Capcom's *Vs.* series). Select any two combatants and, any time during the fight, hit the "Tag" button (to the right of the Right Punch button), and voila! Your current character runs offscreen and is replaced by your tag team partner, who you control as well. There's only about a one-second delay between switching characters, so juggle combos while switching characters are a very real (and EVIL) possibility. When you 'tag' in your teammate, it also gives a resting character time to recover any health lost (again, similar to the Capcom *Vs.* series).

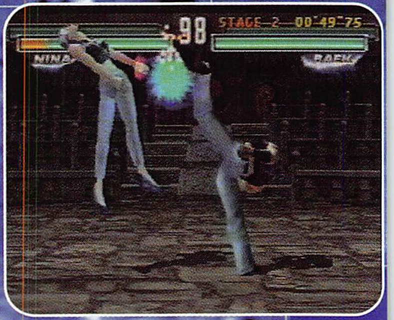
The version that I immersed myself in was not yet complete, lacking an end boss and end team. However, gameplay and graphics remain relatively the same from *Tekken 3*, with a few minor changes. First off, characters now seem a bit more balanced, so that any fighter can beat any other fighter regardless of speed, power, or technique. And while it was early, I swear by the gaming gods that knocked down enemies 'bounced' higher off the floor. What does this mean? Juggle heaven. In fact, I've knocked down an opponent, hit him back into the air, and 'tagged' my teammate in to continue the circus-juggling. As far as the visuals, the version I played had some very cool alternate costumes for each character. Namco will also probably be making more graphical tweaks before the game is released to the public.

Unlike the Capcom *Vs.* series, if one of your fighters dies in a round, the whole team loses the round. So you really have to watch your health during fights, or else you'll lose a round with one of your fighters still at full health.

Tekken Tag Tournament is set to come out in arcades sometime in late July or early August, and Namco is already talking about a national tournament this year. But don't trust me; trust the Magic 8-Ball as I ask the question: "Will *Tekken Tag Tournament* be one of the hottest arcade fighters this year?" Its response? "As I see it, Yes." And trust me folks, the Magic 8-Ball doesn't lie. **Dangohead**

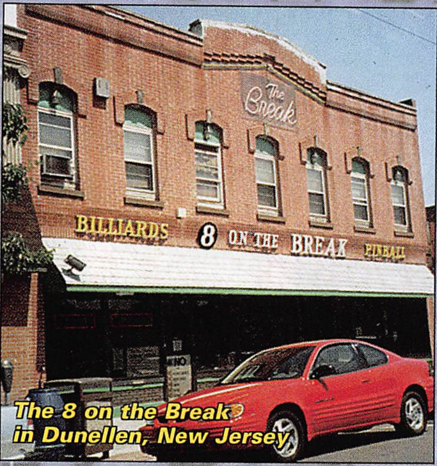




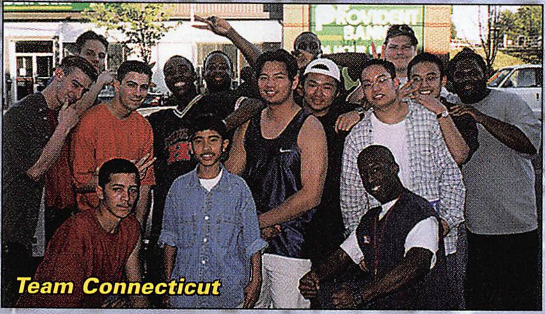




ECC4 Tournament Report



The 8 on the Break in Dunellen, New Jersey


Team Connecticut

The East Coast Championships, a tournament which initially started as a small convention for local *SF* players, has now grown into a legendary *Street Fighter* event. In its fourth straight year now, the event took place Memorial Day weekend from May 29th-30th at "The 8 on the Break" in Dunellen, New Jersey. The Break is no stranger to hard-core *SF* players, as it regularly holds weekly tourna-

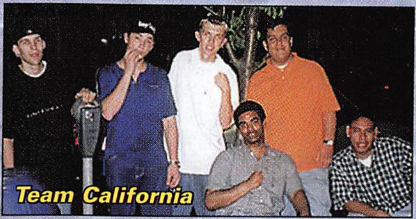

Team ECC Event Staff

ments. Only because of the hard work of founder Chris Cotty, tournament administrator Todd Dwyer, and the rest of the ECC staff can this annual event be made possible. Players gathered together to see new and old faces, to show off newfound skills, and to stake their claim at being the best that is, the best that was, and the best that's yet to come.

The biggest attraction at ECC was *Street Fighter Alpha 3,* although players could also try their hand at *Hyper Fighting, Super Turbo, Marvel vs. Capcom, Street Fighter Alpha 2,* and *Street Fighter 3: Second Impact.* Despite the plethora of other games, *Street Fighter Alpha 3* attracted the most competition, drawing a pool of 115 players. All the attendees showed off their vast repertoire of tricks and combos, spanning an impressive array of characters... Everything from Apoc's bullying Balrog, to Cuellar's Chunster of Annoyance, to Cole's "Tenacious D" Dhalsim, to the wonder kid Amir (who SF veteran Chensor deemed the "the future of hard-core arcade prowess," as non-existent as it is right now), and of course, the legendary Alex "Sixth Sense" Valle — widely acknowledged as the best *SF* player in the U.S. One of the more exciting matches pitted veteran Alex "Psychic-Fighters Network" Valle against "The Young *SF* Seer" Amir, for the First Place slot in *Street Fighter Alpha 3.* In the end, it was Valle and his V-ism Akuma (emulating a style similar to Daigo, the *SFA3* champion in Japan) who took it home, winning 2-1 against Amir. The finals consisted of Californians: Valle versus Duong's "Patiently Slow and Deadly" Dhalsim in a best 4 out of 7 match. And as no surprise, Valle came out the winner, stifling the comeback Duong was mounting. 4-2 was the final score, with Valle using V-ism Akuma to beat out Duong's A-ism Charlie.

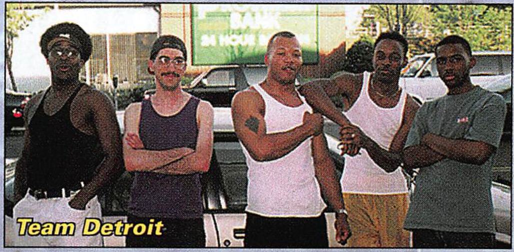
Street Fighter Alpha 3 had the biggest draw and was the most hotly contested of the tournaments. Here are the results of the rest of the ECC. Thanks to Chris Brockington (AKA Bahn) for the detailed info regarding ECC4. Special thanks go to Charlie Wong and the all ECC4 staff. For more a detailed report of ECC4, go to www.the-nextlevel.com/features/index.html.

Dangohead


Team California

Street Fighter Alpha 3
(115 participants)
1) Alex Valle (Westminster, CA)
2) Thao Duong (Orange County, CA)
3) Amir Amirsaleh (New York, NY)

Super Street Fighter II Turbo
(78 participants)
1) John Choi (Sunnyvale, CA)
2) Gary Vialdo (Virginia Beach, VA)
3) Seth Killian (Champaign, IL)


Team Detroit


Team Boston

Street Fighter Alpha 2 (78 participants)
1) David Sirlin (Sunnyvale, CA)
2) Thao Duong (Orange County, CA)
3) Mike Cheng (Edison, NJ)

Marvel VS Capcom (78 participants)
1) Eddie Lee (Queens, NY)
2) Roberto Aponte (Trumbull, CT)
3) Alex Valle (Westminster, CA)

Street Fighter 3: Second Impact
(63 participants)
1) Alex Valle (Westminster, CA)
2) Eddie Lee (Queens, NY)
3) Juan Gonzalez (Houston, TX)

Hyper Fighting (48 participants)
1) John Choi (Sunnyvale, CA)
2) Jesse Howard (Minneapolis, MN)
3) Jason Cole (Sunnyvale, CA)


Team Chinatown Fair

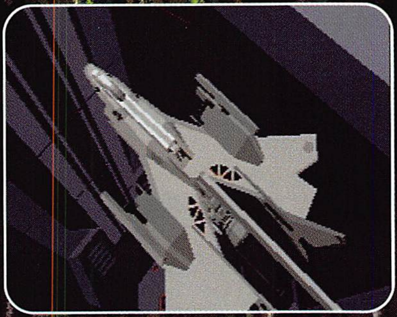


The Graveyard

Silpheed







When Sega first announced that they would officially bring their own CD-ROM format to the gaming world, fans everywhere rejoiced. With the promise of "unlimited storage space" and "games that would go on forever" and "no annoying black loading screens" gamers everywhere anxiously awaited any and all news on Sega's 'next big thing.' Expectations were high for the newest peripheral to brave the ever-treacherous add-on sea: SNES-killing games (graphically speaking) replete with 'full, two-plane, sprite scaling and bi-axial rotation'; long video sequences that would never fit on a cart (woo!); and the opportunity for true 'Redbook' audio. If the games didn't blow you away, the buzz words certainly could.

And so the promise was made...and summarily broken. Sure, one of the initial games was cool (*Wonder Dog* has always been a fav), but for the most part, it was a sad collection of sorry titles. Long video sequences gave way to the death-like *Night Trap* (<sniff>, we'll miss ya, Dana) with its rusty screen door FMV; 'full, two-plane, sprite scaling and bi-axial rotation' gave way to, uh, nothing in the initial batch of games; but at least we had the blazing music of full Redbook audio (small consolation, though). However, like reviewing a game in its alpha state (scary stuff, folks) leveling judgement on the Sega CD based on its first clutch of games would be like a woman judging Dango on his choice of automobiles...or the lack thereof — just 'cause he doesn't have it together... Yet, that doesn't mean he never will <crossing fingers>.

And so it was with the Sega CD (jury's still out on Dangohead). Despite an initially rocky start, the system did manage to put forth its best foot and delivered games like *Batman Returns* (pure scaling mania), *AH3-Thunderstrike* (from Core, prior to their Lara infatuation) and *Dark Wizard*, among many others. But gamers wanted something different; something that could compete with Nintendo's new FX-chip powered killer app, *StarFox*. They found that 'something' in Game Arts' *Silpheed*.

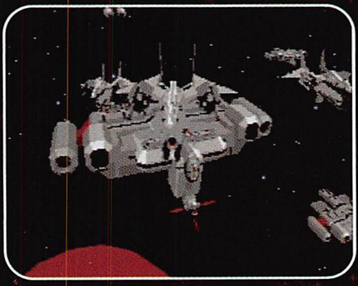
Now I'm not here to get into some overly complex debate about whether the polygonal backgrounds in this game were real-time, pre-calculated, streamed or spooled — that's what Internet newsgroups are for. No, I'm here to perhaps evoke some sense of appreciation for what *Silpheed* brought to the gaming world back in the early '90s; a sense of history, perhaps. See, not only was *Silpheed* a harbinger (good or bad) of things to come it was also revolutionary for its time frame. Taking their rather lackluster PC effort (published by Sierra in the States) and coupling it with awe-inspiring 3D backdrops, Game Arts set out to show gamers just what could be done with the (then) fledgling CD-ROM format.



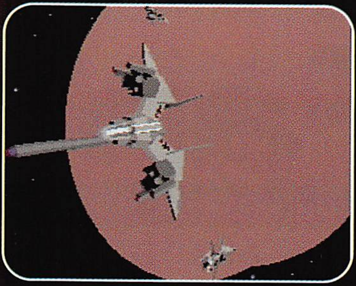
Sure, NEC had a drive out for quite some time,

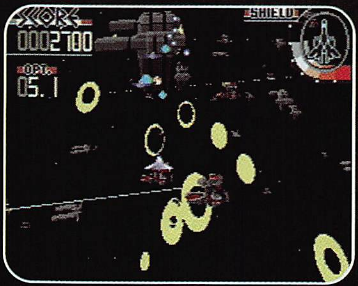
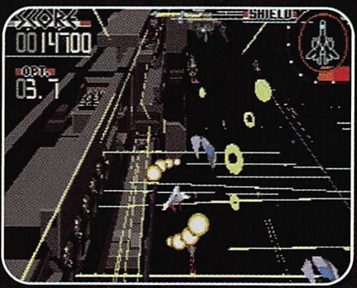








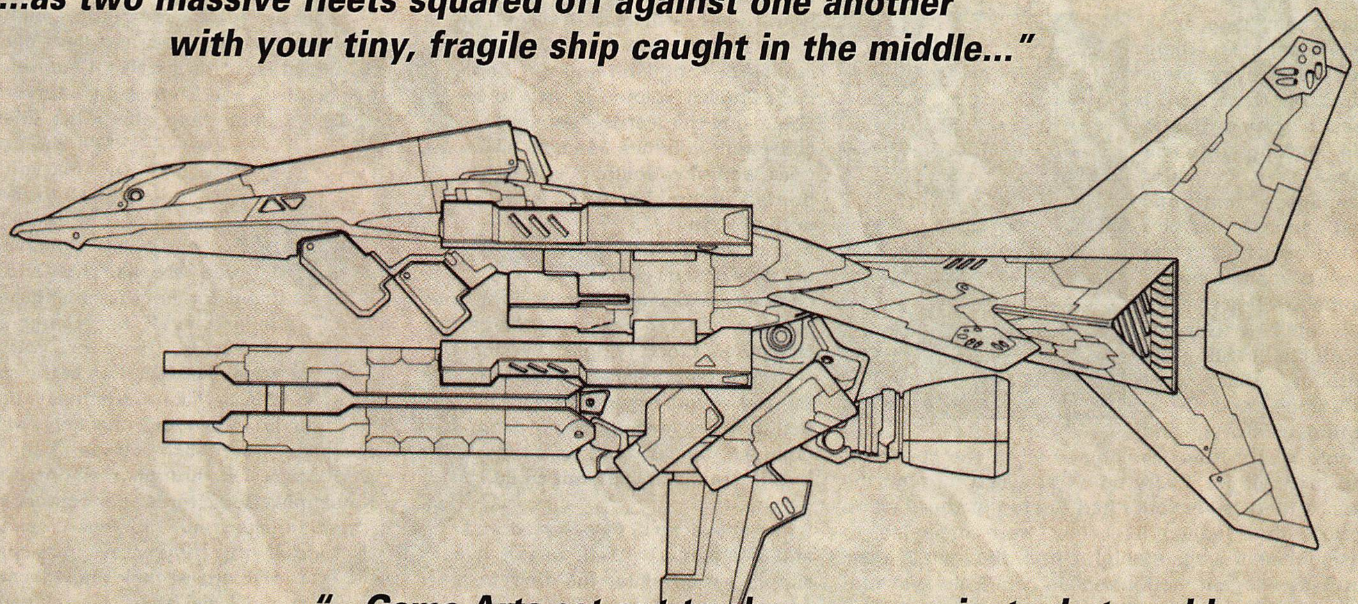



but they had never really pushed the device as anything more than extra storage room for speech and cinemas (up till the release of *Sherlock Holmes* by I-Com Simulations, NEC Japan didn't even think spooling video was possible on their drive), but the Sega CD with an extra CPU (a second Motorola 68000 chip) and a dedicated ASIC chip (to handle the scaling and rotation effects) could do things no drive till that point could dream of (of course not boosting its color handling ability was a **grievous** oversight).

Your tiny, insignificant spacecraft hurtling through level after level of stunning backgrounds melded to some slightly questionable gameplay (most people liken it to a modified version of *Gyruss*) — that spelled sensation back in the early days of Sega CD gaming. As a brief anecdote, a sales person at the local EB tried to convince me to buy the horrific *Dracula* Sega CD game over this one (they both arrived on the same date, incidentally). Sure, the game and the power ups were a bit lackluster and probably couldn't actually compare gameplay-wise to Nintendo's *StarFox*, but it was simply a spectacle the likes

"...as two massive fleets squared off against one another with your tiny, fragile ship caught in the middle..."



"...Game Arts set out to show gamers just what could be done with the (then) fledgling CD-ROM format..."



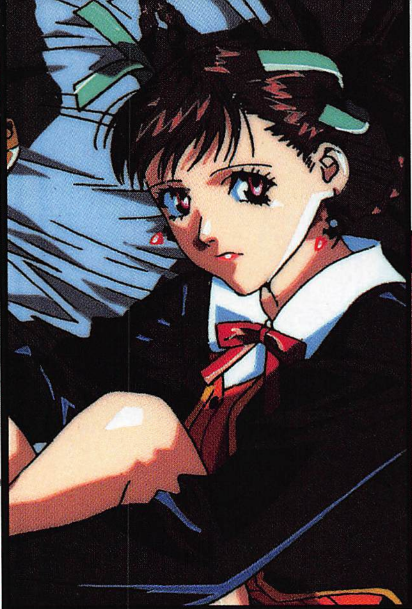
of which we'd never seen before, and that made many a gamer simply ignore the so-so gameplay for some very nice eye candy. Who could forget the stunning space battle as two massive fleets squared off against one another with your tiny, fragile ship caught in the middle. Or the incredible (at the time) sequence as your ship skimmed over the Earth's (?) surface.

What it all boils down to is that *Silpheed* was a head-turner, but didn't feature any sort of lasting appeal. After you'd seen all the glorious pre-rendered CG backgrounds there really wasn't much to keep you coming back for more. But back then, back when every Sega fan needed a *StarFox*-killer, Game Arts obliged. Now if only they'd re-code the game in full 3D, and make a sorta *Wing Commander*-style adventure out of it (though I suppose *Shadow Squadron* already did that, eh?). So forget all the buzz words, bolt on down to your local retailer and dig up a used copy (got mine for $5) just to see where we came from. **ECM**






Dangerous things come in small packages



Sawa, from *Kite*

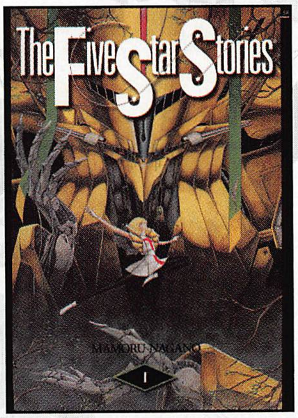
neo AnimeFan

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Well, I've now seen both ***the Phantom Menace*** and ***Austin Powers 2*** ... and I hate to say it, but I enjoyed the latter far more. Don't get me wrong, ***PM*** was a good movie, but it neither had that certain spark nor the "serious atmosphere while still a kid-safe movie" feel that the original trilogy had. Of course, since I grew up on ***Star Wars***, since it was my life, the fantasy and myth that I looked up to, I'm sure nothing to follow could have ever lived up to that. Moving on, a few of you have pointed out a rather sloppy error that I made a few issues back: the name of the song that I love so much by Speed is "Nettaiya," NOT "Kettaiya." Baka shidoshi. Finally, if you haven't played it yet, go play ***Crazy Taxi***. No words can express how fun this game is, and driving like a madman around an actual city with a passenger screaming at you to slow down is a pleasure you just can't get enough of. And it's coming out for Dreamcast? I love this world... ***- shidoshi***

Manga Scene Special Feature

Five Star Stories



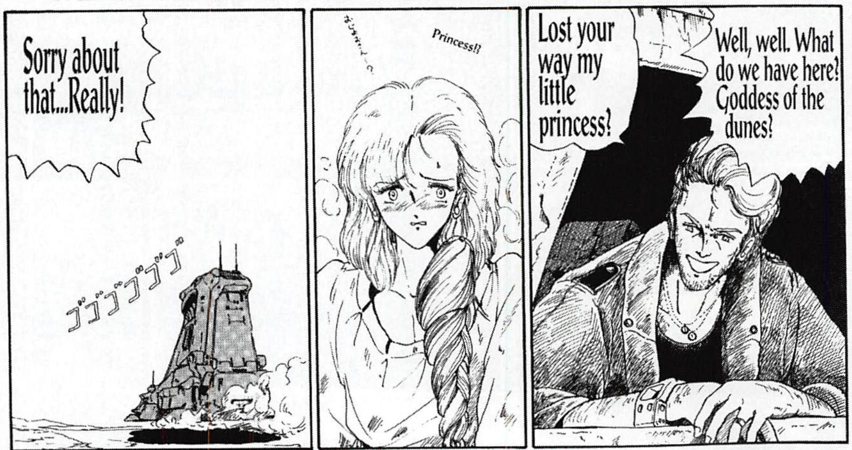
Many years ago, back when puppies where the oldest living creatures on the Earth, I was a young anime fan getting into all those weird "Japanese cartoons and comics" that you could only find at the "weird" comic shops. Somehow I received in the mail a General Products catalog (a catalog with a very infamous, and interesting, history), and would sit for hours looking at all of the cool stuff included within. Every time I browsed through the mecha models section, I had to stop at these weird robots that looked like they were designed to resemble extravagant knights from the middle ages. Intricate, elegant, and just plain cool, I always wondered who they were and what their story was. Fast forward a few years, and I was surprised to run across a manga running in Newtype called "The Five Star Stories." Surprised because I had finally found the source of those mecha, I finally knew where they were from and had at least some connection to make to them. Ever since then, I kept a small wish, deep down inside of me, that someday someone would bring the series over to the US so that I might one day get to satisfy my curiosity.

It's been a while... a LONG while, but finally, ***The Five Star Stories*** is in English and making its introduction on our shores. As soon as I found out that the US version had been released, I was on the phone ordering myself a copy. For $8.98, you get an 80-page first volume which contains 60 pages of actual manga, and the rest of the book filled with detailed information and artwork concerning the back story for ***FSS***, the characters, notes from its creator, a guide to the "background sounds" written in katakana, and an extra little sticker packet. The book is big, reprinting the manga at the exact size as it originally ran (and is still running) in Newtype, and one of the coolest and best parts is that it's being released in Japanese format. For any of you out there who haven't seen Viz doing this with the ***DragonBall Z*** and ***Evangelion*** manga, that means that the book reads the traditional Japanese way — from right to left — instead of having the artwork flipped and formatted like a standard English-reading book. Each English volume is said to be about one-third of the Japanese collection volumes, and if all goes well new volumes will be printed bi-monthly from now until the summer of 2003 in order to give us the complete ***FSS*** saga. That was the one request ***FSS***'s creator, Mamori Nagano had for an English version — that it be published in full until the end — and, barring financial difficulties preventing them from doing so, that is what Toys Press Inc., the publisher, intends to do.



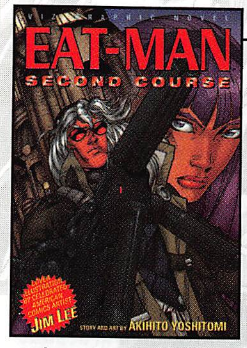
So what exactly IS ***Five Star Stories*** about, anyhow? Well, to put it as simply as possible, the first volume opens by saying this: "This is a tale of the god of light, Amaterasu, and his wife Lachesis, who emerged victorious from an era of wars that raged throughout four solar systems. It will also tell of the many bold and daring headliners who battled courageously during those times, some victorious, some not, but always in the name of chivalry." Of course, saying that about ***FSS*** is like saying that ***Neon Genesis Evangelion*** is about "some kids who pilot big robots and fight aliens," but at least it's a start. If your idea of a deep and engrossing storyline is something along the lines of ***Ranma 1/2***, then ***FSS*** probably isn't for you (no offense to ***Ranma 1/2*** intended, of course). However, if you are like me and are dying for another manga on a similar level as things like ***Nausicaa***, then for you the release of ***FSS*** here in the states will be like Christmas coming early. Currently, the only way to purchase the English release of the ***Five Star Stories*** is through mail-order from Kinokuniya Bookstores. For contact information, check out the Toys Press web-site at http://www.toyspress.com or give one of their many locations a call (their stores can be found, among other places, in San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York). Trust me, if you're looking for the next big sweeping epic manga title, it's well worth your time to track down a copy. ***- shidoshi***

Remember, this panel reads from right to left, not left to right.



" I'm in control... you're all dead now. "

Eat Man: Second Course

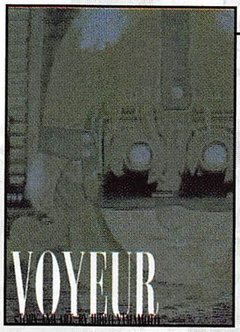


Action • Viz • 13+
200 pages • US Format • Graphic Novel

B-

The premise behind ***Eat Man*** is certainly two things — very interesting, and very weird. Bolt Crank, an "explorer for hire" (sort of the bounty hunter/mercenary/guide type), possesses a rather peculiar skill: he can eat anything made of metal, and reproduce it from his hand at a later time. Of course, a person who can do such things becomes well known pretty quickly, and it seems that Bolt is always in demand for one task or another. Bolt ends up basically becoming a wanderer, travelling from one town to another finding jobs and means of survival at the various places that he stops. Of course, it seems that more often than not Bolt's adventures involve a cute girl somehow, and such is exactly what we get here. The dying wish of a kind-hearted swordsman, the protection of a city from a huge water guardian, the finding of a slave girl who has escaped from her captors, the role of bodyguard for a girl whose blood can bring eternal life, and the locating of a young mermaid who was taken from her people long ago — these are the adventures that Bolt must deal with whether he wishes to or not. ***Eat Man*** is a cool title, better than the anime version but not exactly the best thing that I've ever seen. My biggest complaint is that none of the stories really have any connection to one another, something which might help to improve the storyline somewhat dramatically. Fun stories and an interesting and groovy hero are enough to make ***Eat Man*** at least worth looking at. ***- shidoshi***

Voyeur



Action/Drama • Viz/Pulp • 17+
230 pages • US Format • Graphic Novel

B-

Ko has reasons not to trust people... good reasons... but for the most part, he trusts his girlfriend. But one night, after they've said their goodbyes and she takes off, events happen that make him begin to question that trust. Ko meets a strange man, a voyeur, who tells him that his girl is screwing around with another man. Ko refuses to believe it at first, but as time goes on, his mind can't get off that thought. Was that strange man actually correct? Soon, the only way Ko can be satisfied is if he sees for himself. But in order to do so, he is forced to team up with the voyeur, and begins to get sucked down into his world of perversion. The two become friends after a while, and begin a business of voyeurism, to catch those who are trying to catch unsuspecting people. But even as they find their first client, they run into a challenge that might be more than the pair can handle. ***Voyeur*** certainly lives up to its name, in the sense that it's a title that is both good and a bit disturbing at the same time. It's one of those kinds of stories where you aren't sure if you want to root for the so-called "heroes" or not, and instead are just along for the ride due to your curiosity of wanting to see what comes next... just like the voyeurs themselves. Not an overly wonderful manga (especially in the art department), but I'm a sucker for the weirder, darker kind of stuff, so I got a kick out of it. If it sounds like your kind of bag, give it a go. ***- shidoshi***

Goods Showcase

Pokemon Card Game

Anymore, it's pretty hard to ignore any portion of the ***Pokemon*** mania (or "Pokemania" as my grandmother used to call it), so I figured it was high time that I said a word or two on the ***Pokemon*** card game. If you were around for last issue, I gave you a taste of it by taunting you with the special E3 version of the Pikachu card that I got at the show, but this time around we'll take a look at the game itself and what it's all about.



Produced by Wizards of the Coast (you know, those guys who made that ***Magic: the Gathering*** game), the ***Pokemon*** "Trading Card Game" is a game that you play using various special cards, meant to reproduce the world of ***Pokemon*** battles as best it can. If you've ever played ***Magic:TG***, then you'll have a good yet basic idea of what's going on here. Each player has a deck of ***Pokemon*** cards, and you take turns putting out a Pokemon creature card from a "reserve" of five Pokemon cards. With careful strategy and planning, you then use the Pokemon you've put into the fight in an attempt to defeat your opponent's Pokemon. If you Pokemon totally defeats theirs, then the game is over and you walk away victorious. However, there are of course a number of "modifier" cards which can be played to swing the battle in either player's favor (cards such as healing potions of Pokemon switching cards), and "energy" cards which are required in order for a Pokemon to be able to use better attacks.

I'll admit it, I used to be a sucker for Magic:tG, and these ***Pokemon*** cards sure are cute, but the last thing I need is another card game for me (and me money) to get sucked into. However, if such a game of skill involving those cute little creatures sounds like your cup of tea, then go buy a starter deck or two and find some unsuspecting friend to play against. I do kind of worry about this game, however. I have spent NO money on ***Pokemon*** cards at all — just took what was offered to me — and somehow I already have five Pikachu cards. If these things are reproducing on their own like I fear, then it won't be long before I'll be buried in a pile of cards depicting the silly little yellow rat. ***- shidoshi***

AnimeFan rates each title reviews on a scale of A (excellent), B (good), C (average), D (poor), and F (horrible). Remember, a grade of C isn't bad, and only when a title starts getting into the D range should you start to consider avoiding it at all costs. For DVD titles, two scores are present, one for the anime itself, and the other for it's DVD presentation. The DVD grade covers everything from image quality to package to extras, so while a DVD may look beautiful, it could loose points for having no extras or other such issues.

Guide to Ratings Codes

We'll use this example:

Sub | Dub
VHS | LD | DVD

Black: The title is available in that format / language. So, for our example, the title is out in both Sub and Dub on VHS.

Underlined: The version being reviewed. So, we're reviewing the VHS Sub version.

Greyed: Not available. So, our title isn't out on LD.

Red: Coming soon / planned. Our example title is planned for release on DVD.

Send comments, letters, artwork to:

AnimeFan
6301 DeSoto Avenue
Unit #E
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

Or :
shidoshi@gamefan.com



Kite

AF Best of the Issue!

Adventure • Movie • Anime Works • 16+
45 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD
A-

How many of these types of anime have come out? Cute little girls who are actually cold, emotionless killers. Yet, I don't remember any of said anime turning out nearly as well as ***Kite*** did. We are introduced to the story of Sawa, a pretty, youthful girl who has been dragged into a dark underground where she is now a ruthless killer. Her parents killed, she was taken in by a corrupt cop who runs a "services for hire" ring on the side. Now Sawa must decide if she is to exist in the life she has found herself in, or if she has the courage to break free and escape the world that is slowly dragging her down. What makes ***Kite*** so good? It's a number of things, all pieced together to craft a high-action show that is as strong on characters as it is on action. The character designs are great, both in their look and personality (Sawa is SUCH a cutie). The direction in the show is superb, and quiet exposition scenes are done just as well as the fast-paced, high action ones. Such great direction is something that is not only rare in most anime, but in most Hollywood action titles as well, so seeing it handled like it was here is a definite sight for sore eyes. This excellent direction is what helps support ***Kite***'s strongest area — the action. Be it a two-second gunfight, or the fierce battle that spans a few office buildings, ***Kite***'s action is up there with the very best of the gunfights that the US and Asia have given us over the years. There really aren't a lot of top quality "high speed gun blazing action flicks" in the anime world — at least if you ask me — and to have one that is not only good, but cares just as much about characters and storyline as it does action, is long overdue. Finally, our little concoction is topped of with a fantastic soundtrack, a string of jazzy melodies that fit the anime perfectly and give it that final touch of atmosphere, and a very commendable English dub. ***Kite*** is a phenomenal title, a good escape for those times when you're looking for nothing more than some hardcore death and destruction. Some of you out there might not be familiar with Media Blasters (the company under which Anime Works, Kitty Media, and Tokyo Shock all reside), as even though they have been around for a while they are still a rather unrecognized name when it comes to anime in the US. However, if they keep snatching up and releasing awesome titles such as this, and the below-reviewed ***Elf Princess Rane***, then I can't hope for them to become a household name fast enough. Now to start bugging them to put some of these titles out on DVD...

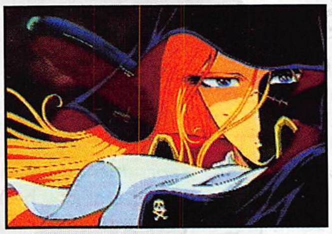
- shidoshi



Queen Emeraldas

Adventure • Movie • ADV Films • 15+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD
B+

The Afressians, a race of beings who wield power and the desire to conquer those weaker than them, are terrorizing the galaxy and any innocent people who get in their way. They blaze a path of destruction wherever they go, but when they happen to cross paths with the infamous space pirate Emeraldas, and her mighty starship the Queen Emeraldas, the Afressians suddenly realize that they may have met their match. Is one space pirate enough to go up against an entire armada, or have the Afressians bitten off far more than they can chew? As I said last issue with ***DNA Sights 999.9***, I love Leiji Matsumoto's character designs — the tall, slender look he gives to all of his female (and some of the male) characters. Emeraldas is the epitome of hardcore, beautiful and elegant yet lethally deadly at the same time. She is a character, much like Harlock, who has such a presence in ***Queen Emeraldas*** that they could make even a mediocre title watchable simply by showing up. Leiji's character designs are complimented with a rather odd art style, one which uses a lot of dark tones and heavy black lines, and while this look wouldn't work with most anime out there, it suits his characters perfectly. Unfortunately, QE misses being an A-caliber title due to a few shortcomings it sadly has. The dub is rather uneven — some voices are rather good, while others are only okay — and there is, by far, too much use of REALLY badly rendered CG scenes. Why do some anime creation houses have this obsession with mixing horrible CG into their anime? **[grumble]** I guess I'll never understand. Anyhow, ***Queen Emeraldas*** is still a great show, with wonderful characters and a lot of enjoyment to be had. The whole CG aspect doesn't destroy this show or anything — it's more of an annoyance — but unfortunately bad CG in a good anime is one of my largest anime-related pet peeves. Still, don't let that stop you from catching a great OAV title like this one. *- shidoshi*



Maison Ikkoku: Godai Come Home

Comedy • TV (2 eps) • Viz Video • 13+
52 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD
B+

Godai ... shacking up with some other girl? Did Kyoko actually see what she thought she saw? When Godai calls to ask the manager for his room back, she tells him that it's already rented. But then she finds out the truth about Godai's situation, and goes on a mad hunt all over town trying to find him. If she can't find Godai and he never comes home, will she blame herself for driving him away from Maison Ikkoku for good? Next, the strange and somewhat creepy Yotsuya gives Godai an egg in the middle of the night. When Godai wakes up the next morning to find that it wasn't a dream, and that he indeed has the egg, he panics at the thought of what the message could possibly mean. Is he supposed to eat the egg, or protect it? Should he put it in the refrigerator, or keep it warm? As Godai and the other tenants of Maison Ikkoku ponder on the reason behind the egg, their minds run wild and the egg almost becomes a treasure under lock and key. Why DID Yotsuya give Godai the egg, anyhow? Per usual, ***Maison Ikkoku*** is a great show, and my personal choice for the best that Rumiko Takahashi has created. It's a lighthearted soap opera with a superb cast and enough mellow humor to keep it from ever taking itself too seriously. As well, even though I disagree with some of Viz's dubs sometimes, I still go on record as saying that the ***Maison Ikkoku*** dub is one of the most natural-sounding dubs out there. It's one of those few dubs that doesn't sound like it's a show that has been dubbed, and to be brutally honest, I prefer the English voices to the Japanese ones. I know, I know, I'll burn as a heretic, but it's the truth. Anyhow, enough talking - ***Maison Ikkoku*** is a wonderful series that you should be watching if you aren't. It WOULD be nice if Viz would give us at least one more episode per volume, though. *- shidoshi*

Eat Man: Volume 3

Adventure • OAV • Anime Village • 13+
48 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

C+

Since I've given you the basic points of the ***Eat Man*** storyline in my review of the manga graphic novel, I'm going to skip that part here so that I'm not just repeating myself. The anime version of ***Eat Man*** brings Mr. Bolt Crank and his talents to your television screen, bringing the story to life with color and animation and a slightly more serious tone. Yes, when compared to the manga, this is a somewhat more "mature" version, with a quieter, darker Bolt and more adult themed adventures (in the way of seriousness, not perviness). There are those anime titles that work better in anime form than in manga form, and vice versa, and ***Eat Man*** to me is one of those titles that falls into the latter situation. In bringing Bolt Crank into the world of animation, something seems to have been lost, a certain spark seems to not have been lit like it was when he was in his original print form. The anime is slow quite often, and where each volume is a mere 48 minutes, I would SWEAR that they were actually two hours in length. What really bothered me, though, was the interaction between Bolt and the other characters in the various stories. First of all, it seems like NO ONE even notices that there is this guy going around eating metal. "Oh, he just ate my gun, okay," seems to be the attitude that most people have. Not only that, but an alarming amount of female characters instantly fall for and get rather friendly with this strange metal-eating wanderer. If you ask me, a guy who goes around chewing on steel and iron and looks the way he does is NOT the type of guy I would instantly trust with my life and secrets... call me a kook if you will. Finally, it doesn't seem like they much play up Bolt's "special gift" to the extent that they should, or the manga does: the series seems less about a guy who can eat and reproduce metal items and more like a series about a guy who happens to be a bit odd. ***Eat Man*** reminds me a bit of those TV shows that were popular in the '80s, where a person or persons wandered from town to town happening upon situations in which they get mixed up. Those kinds of shows, while interesting in certain ways, usually have little of a solid running storyline or build-up to give them strength, and the same tends to be the problem here. There's certainly a lot of possibility here, which showed through in both episodes, but in the end it seems like the creators didn't know exactly what to do with said possibility. Because of this, ***Eat Man*** certainly has its strengths, but they are far overshadowed by the weaknesses. ***- shidoshi***

Battle Skipper: The Movie

Action • OAV • US Manga • 11+
90 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

C-

At the St. Ignacio School for Girls, THE club to be in is the Debutante Club. All of the coolest and most popular girls belong to the club, and all freshman students dream of having their own place among the elite. Yet the Debutante Club is no simple group of snotty girls... it is, instead, a team of ruthless girls who wish to take over not only the school, but the world itself, with their giant "Battle Skipper" robots. The only people with the guts, and robots of their own, to go up against the evil Debutante Club is the small, and slightly oddball group of girls who make up the Etiquette Club. The Etiquette Club is a front for the Lighting Attacker Exstars, a team determined to keep the world safe from harm with their super advanced prototype Battle Skippers. Cute girls, big robots, sound like a great start to an anime, doesn't it? Unfortunately, actually watching the show crushed any hopes that I had. ***Battle Skipper: the Movie*** is a title geared towards the younger crowd, a point which becomes quite obvious after watching any small amount of the show. The problem is, in my opinion, children deserve better than this. ***BS:tM*** suffers from a cast of characters which are horribly one dimensional, art and animation that are laughably bad far too much of the time, and mecha designs that are so utterly boring that their designs can only be explained by the toy versions of them that you are supposed to buy. To be brutally honest, this show reminded me of the myriad of terrible US cartoons that have been dumped onto our poor children in recent years. Honestly, ***BS:tM*** looks like something that was crafted for our shores to help sell a new line of "cool space robots" to our youth. The reason this title squeaks by with a C- is that the kids might get into it (though there are far better anime titles for the younger viewers, and even if I were younger I'd find these robots boring), and there are some rather funny parts and lines in the dub, intentional or not. With all of the top quality titles that US Manga Corps and its sister companies have, I really think they should have left this one but a faint memory. ***- shidoshi***

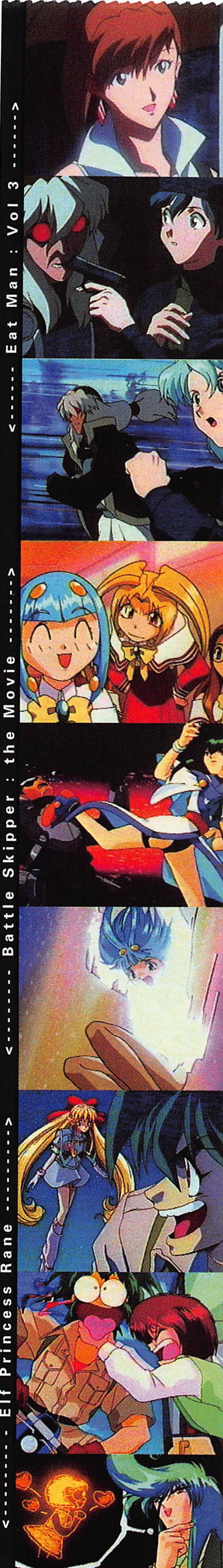


Elf Princess Rane

Comedy/Adv • OAV • AnimeWorks • 16+
60 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

A-

Go Takarada wants to be a treasure hunter. His parents are world famous explorers, travelling Europe looking for mystical and fabulous items from the past, and Go has set his heart on following in their footsteps. His hard work and searching has yet to prove success, until one day when from a flash of light, a small yet beautiful faerie-like elf appears. Go is certain that she is the one legend says will lead an explorer to fabulous treasure ... while Rane, the elf, is actually looking for a brave hero to lead HER to the treasure. Misunderstandings or not, the two embark on a journey for a mystical fortune that proves to be far more than they bargained for! Can Go and Rane survive not only their trek, but the squabbles between the wealthy Yumenokata and the Fire Department, the lovesick Mari who longs to be with Go, the beautiful yet strange man who is chasing Mari as she chases Go, Go's seemingly never-ending supply of sisters, and a second elf Leen who has come to kill Rane? I'm not going to say much about the story, for two very important reasons. First, the kooky curve that they throw into the story is part of what makes it so much fun, and explaining it here would not only not make it sound very exciting, but it would also spoil the anime for you. Second ... well, to be honest, I'm not totally sure what the story is exactly. This is, and I feel very confident saying this, one of the STRANGEST anime comedies that I have EVER seen. Not strange in a weird, surreal kind of way — that would be too simple. No, ***Elf Princess Rane*** has all of the foundation of your average anime comedy, but then infuses it with elements that are so damn odd that they make your brain hurt. I could point out the guy who talks as if he were making up a language as he went along (complete with backward subtitles), Rane, the elven girl who thinks she's making sense when everyone else hears total gibberish, the other elf girl who keeps forgetting that she's come to kill Rane ... and that's only the start of the character and situation lunacy. Half the time you're laughing because the show is so funny, the other half because you're so confused that you think you're going insane. This is truly one of those titles that is just so out there, so weird, so utterly bizarre that it entertains you and makes you laugh, while at the same time scares you to no end. And yet, that is its wonderful charm. I STILL break out into fits of laughter thinking of many of the scenes from this show (especially the rap), and between this and the new ***Austin Powers*** movie I probably won't stop laughing for at least a month. If this doesn't become a hit over here, then I'll lose all faith in US anime fans. "Gotchabaguse!!!" ***- shidoshi***





DVD Connection

Anime - ultra high-qual digital style

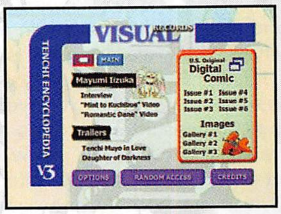
Tenchi Muyo!: Ultimate Collection

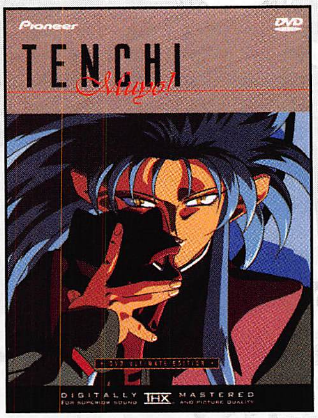
Comedy/Action • OAV (14 eps.) • Pioneer • 13+
420 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

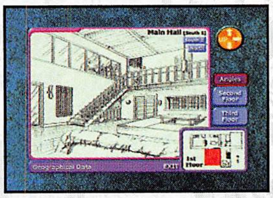
Anime **A-** DVD **A-**

Anime

I can still remember my very first experience with ***Tenchi Muyo!*** — I had just purchased a LaserDisc player, so that I could get versions of my favorite movies and anime that would not only look better, but would also be permanent. Wanting something that I could actually play on my LD player, I purchased the first volume of an anime called ***Tenchi Muyo!*** It looked kind of cool, and it was one of the few LD anime titles I could find at my local store. After watching the first episode, I was hooked, and I purchased the next five LDs whenever I had the chance over the next few weeks. What would it be like for me to relive such a large part of my anime past? The ***Tenchi*** OAV series stands the test of time; it's still quite good, and yet ... after seeing all of the various incarnations of ***Tenchi*** that I have now, it no longer seems as exciting as it used to. The "true definition of Tenchi Muyo" status that the original OAV series (the first six episodes, actually) held for so long has now been, in my opinion, passed on to the ***Tenchi*** movies. Some may argue that the simpler, less "multiple personalities" characters of the original OAVs are when ***Tenchi*** is at its strongest, but I've come to know and love the characters we know now and the qualities they've come to have, so it's hard for me to go back. It IS interesting to see some of the aspects of the ***Tenchi*** mythos that have quietly slipped away, and realize how much I missed them ... Ryoko's cute little tail that has long disappeared, for example. The ***Tenchi*** OAV series still stands as the foundation for all that was to come, and no ***Tenchi*** fan can truly be a ***Tenchi*** fan without having seen this series ... but I am no longer of the opinion that this is the only ***Tenchi*** series to really count.







DVD

No matter what some laserphiles may try to argue, ***Tenchi*** NEVER looked or sounded this good on LD. Pioneer decided that if they were going to do this collection, that they would do it right, and ***Tenchi*** has been digitally remastered with a new THX-certified transfer and a Japanese audio track that was remixed in Dolby Digital 5.1. ***Tenchi's*** fourteen episodes (Mihoshi Special is not included) are tucked away on two DVDs, with a third being version 3.0 of the "Tenchi Encyclopedia" which has come along with the DVD releases of the two movies. The encyclopedia is awesome, packed with goodies, and has a wonderfully nice layout and design to it. The only thing that I felt was missing from the encyclopedia was the cool little interview segment with both the US and Japanese voice actors that was included with the final OAV episode, but I'm sure I'll live. The $120 price tag might make you a bit nervous, but think about this: it cost me $210 to get only halfway through the series on LaserDisc, so this is a pretty damn good deal (and takes up a LOT less room). My only real regrets are minor, but existent: there were a few traces of compression glitching in the time that I spent watching (not horrible, but they shouldn't have been there), and the packaging, while very nice and well put together, contains DVD trays that are tough to remove the discs from. Every time I take one of the DVDs out of it's tray, I feel like I'm going to snap it in half — not a good feeling if you ask me. Finally, my biggest complaint was that chapter stops were only placed at the beginning of each OAV episode, which makes it frustrating when you are trying to go to a specific part of a certain episode. Even with those minor imperfections, Pioneer should be commended for not only redoing one of their most popular titles on DVD, but doing it right as well. Releases like this are what make DVD such a wonderful format, and if you still doubt how much DVD can do for anime after seeing this set then there's no chance you'll ever be convinced. Hopefully we'll not only see more like this from Pioneer (**[cough]** ***Hakkenden*** **[cough]**), but from other companies as well. ***- shidoshi***

The Venus Wars

Adventure • Movie • US Manga • 15+
104 min • Sub | Dub • VHS | LD | DVD

Anime **B** DVD **B-**

Anime

A short distance into the future, mankind has spread itself onto a second home, a terraformed Venus. Even on Venus, however, people can't always get along, and an old war between two factions on the planet rages up again. Hiro Seno, who is part of a sports motorbike racing team, finds himself following his pals on a plan to destroy one of the enemy's tanks. The plan goes wrong, and Hiro and crew end up as mercenaries fighting in the war they never wanted to be part of in the first place. Hiro must find a way to not only survive, but escape from the military unit and make it back to the friends and home that he was forced to leave. If you've read the manga version, don't expect to see the same story here, or you might be disappointed. That said, this is a very cool movie, with some seriously nice animation and fast-paced scenes. Even though ***The Venus Wars*** was made in 1989 (which makes it rather old by today's standards), a great many of the scenes put to shame most of the new stuff in terms of art and animation. We don't get a chance to get to know and care about most of the characters, but beyond that one sore point, this one's time well spent.

DVD

DVD can do two things with an anime title — it can give you pretty much what you see on VHS, just a bit crisper and cleaner, or it can restore colors and "life" that was lost due to the poor quality of VHS. ***The Venus Wars*** DVD is a prime example of the first option — it looks good, but just doesn't have that spark. Unfortunately, that's usually the case with older anime, as for one reason or another there isn't a lot to work with in the first place. This disc COULD have looked better, I'm sure, both in terms of color quality and a few slight bits of obvious compression in the background here and there, but for the most part I had little complaint about the transfer. Throw in a few nice little extras, the usual DVD options, and you've got a DVD release that is just like the other two this month — nothing horrible exactly, but nothing really done wrong, which gets the job done. ***- shidoshi***



AF News Service

Shidoshi's Rant

Since news is a bit thin this month, and this topic has been bugging me a bit lately anyhow, I'm going to take a moment to rant about something that's wrong with the US anime industry. Bad choices of voice actors? Poor subtitles? Horrible packaging? No, it's none of that. It's a plague far bigger than any of those that is infecting more and more US anime releases as it continues to grow ... the lack of volume numbers. For some reason, more series releases than ever are coming out with no sort of volume numbers on them at all. Some titles, such as Pioneer's TV series releases, at least have episode numbers on the back of them so that you can organize them that way (unfortunately, this isn't the case with ***Pokemon***). But others, such as Viz releases like ***Ranma 1/2*** and ***Maison Ikkoku***, not only have no volume numbers on them, but no episode numbers as well. Then there are things like ***Sakura Wars*** and ***Master of Mosquiton*** from ADV Films, titles that you can't even tell are part of a series.

Maybe it's one of those things that seems horribly obvious to one person, but doesn't occur to someone else. Still, why are so many anime companies doing this? For your normal fan, sometimes the only way to know for sure the volume order of a certain series is to pay attention to when each one comes out ... but even then, sometimes multiple volumes are released at once, and it's not easy to keep close track of every anime series out there. For some people, the argument over volume numbers might seem like a silly one, but for anyone who has at least a few volumes of any one series which doesn't have volume numbers, and they get mixed up, then you know exactly what I'm talking about. So, for all of the anime companies out there, this simple message: for the love of Belldandy, PLEASE at least put a small volume number somewhere on your product so that us fans can organize our collections without going utterly insane. Thank you.

Central Park Media News

Just a quick update on some of the things that Central Park Media has planned for the near future. Probably their biggest title is the ***Lodoss War*** television series, ***Record of Lodoss War: Chronicles of the Heroic Knight***. The first volume, "A New Legend Begins," will see release on August 10th, and will be followed by three more volumes, each with three episodes. They've also got ***Midnight Panther***, which is based on the manga, as well as ***Wild Cards***. While ***Wild Cards*** (or is it Wildcards?) won't be out until December, I wanted to be sure to mention it as it stars as one of the lead voice actors our favorite live-action anime girl, Apollo Smile. And, for those of you out there waiting for the ***Revolutionary Girl Utena*** DVD releases (which you ALL should be), "Rose Collection 1" should be coming out as you are reading this. The first volume will contain the first seven episodes, with the other volume having the remaining six episodes of the first "segment" of ***Utena***. CPM is still up in the air as to if they will be releasing the remaining episodes of ***Utena***, so be sure to purchase yourself a copy of the show (so that they know the demand is there) and write to them telling them that you want to see more!

The End of Tenchi?

From rumors that are going around right now, it sounds as if ***Tenchi Muyo in Love 2*** — the new ***Tenchi Muyo*** movie that will be hitting both Japan and the US in late summer — may be the last ***Tenchi*** anime of any type to be produced. To refresh your memory, I'll take you back to the supposed storyline for the new movie that I reported on a number of issues ago:

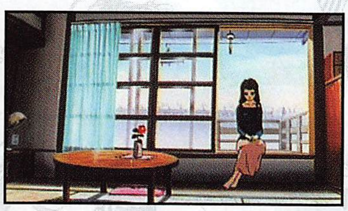
On a warm spring day, it seems that Ryoko and Aeka have finally had it with Tenchi and his wishy-washiness when it comes to telling them which girl he likes better. Tenchi, confronted with two girls demanding him to profess his love to them, chooses Option C, which entails making a mad run for it. Taking his leave to the hills around the Masaki home, he ends up getting lost, and during this time he loses his memory for some reason. Six months later, Ryoko and Aeka FINALLY decide to go out and look for him. They stumble upon Tenchi, looking older, having totally forgotten about his past, and living with a woman named Haruna. Of course, as always, a new girl in Tenchi's life is bound to cause havoc, and questions arise such as what has happened to Tenchi and who this new woman is.

From the quick teaser that was included with the DVD Ultimate Collection, I am VERY much looking forward to this new movie for two reason: the art style looks a bit different in a way that I like, and it seems to be a more mature, serious movie dealing with the relationships between the characters and nothing to do with aliens or monsters or outer space or any of that. But, you say, that's what ***Tenchi*** is supposed to be about! I know, but if the ***Tenchi*** cast is going to go out, I'd much rather it be in a dramatic and serious way. But, we'll just have to wait and see how it turns out. ***- shidoshi***

News Service Previews

Previews up upcoming titles









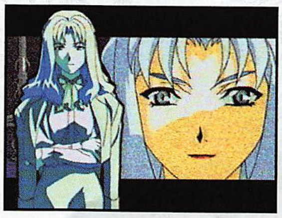
Tenchi Muyo in Love! 2

(tentative title: Tenchi Forever)

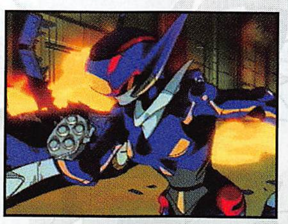




Bubblegum Crisis 2040











Hocus Pocus



Welcome to the pages of cheats, codes, and hints galore!!! Upon these leaves you will find all the assistance you'll need for the hottest games today. Not satisfied? Need help on another game? No problem! If you need codes or hints on any game, mail to GameFan, or e-mail hocuspocus@gamefan.com. Now, travel with thy controller in hand, to a place where cheaters prosper...

GRAND PRIZE
GXTV!

FIRST PRIZE
VIEWPOINT GAME OF YOUR CHOICE

SECOND PRIZE
POCKET GAMEBOY

THIRD PRIZE
1-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION TO GAMEFAN

gXtv CONTEST

GXTV is the world's first video game TV with hyper-amplified sound and graphics. Enhance the thrill of gaming with adjustable speaker doors, stereo surround sound and a 15-watt sub woofer. Plus, the intense screen graphics will make you feel like your head's right inside the game. GXTV is also a 181-channel, 13" stereo TV with two A/V inputs, stereo headphone jack, backlit remote control and tilt/swivel stand. So whatcha waitin' for? Send in those codes and maybe you can win one of these GXTVs for yourself!



GTA: London 1969
Massive Amount of Codes!

If getting around London seems like foreign territory to you, here's a list of codes for you to use. All codes are entered at the Player Name screen.

99 Lives:
MCVICAR

9999990 Points:
BIGBEN

All Levels:
RAZZLE

All Levels
READERWIFE

No Cops
GRASS

Combo Cheat 1: (all weapons, all levels, get out of jail, full armor)
SORTED

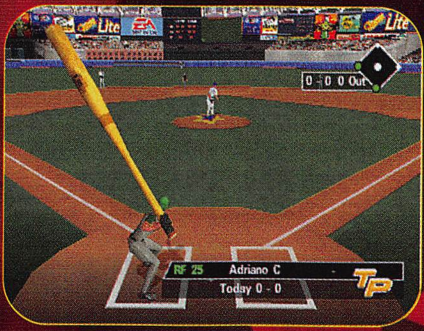
Combo Cheat 2 (all weapons, armor, get out of jail free):
TOOLEDUP

The Code to End All Codes
This code give you all weapons, infinite ammo, all levels, get out of jail free, 99 lives, no cops, and full armor.
HAROLDHAND

Triple Play 2000
Various Gameplay Codes!

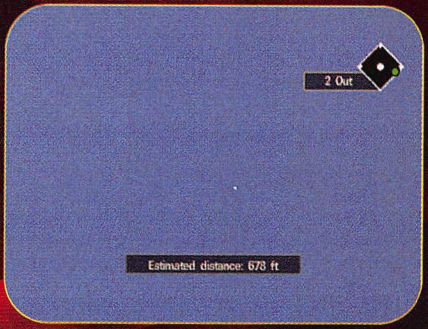


EA Sports Dream team
Select "Single Game" from the main menu. Then at the team selection screen, press left, right, left, right, left,

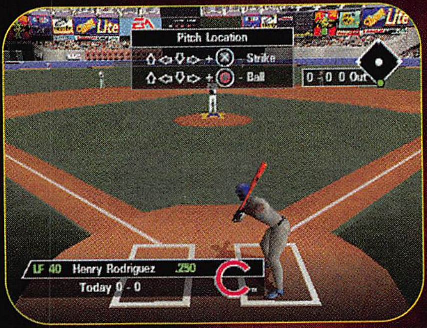




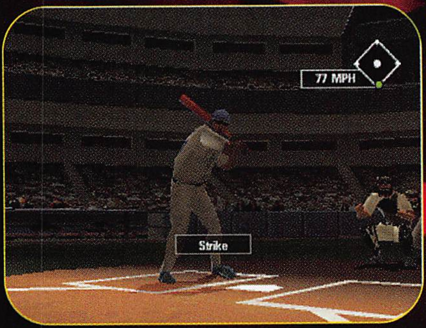
right, left, right, left, right, left, right. You will hear a confirmation sound if you input the code correctly. This team is made up of the game's developers with excellent ability stats. They'll also look weird, as some will be colored all blue or pink, while others have extra small or extra large bats.



Hit a homerun
While in the batter's box, hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and press Triangle, Square, Triangle, Circle, X, Square, left, right. . You will hear a confirmation sound if you input the code correctly.



Homerun sounds
While running around the bases after hitting a homerun, press Circle to hear a whistle, Triangle to hear a soft horn, or Square to hear a loud horn.



Strike out the batter
While on the pitching mound, hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and press up, down, Triangle, Square, Triangle, Circle, X, Square. You will hear a confirmation sound if you input the code correctly.





Control camera
While playing a game, hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and press right, left, up, down, right, and left. You will hear a confirmation sound if you input the code correctly. Use the following actions to control the camera:

L1 + D-pad: Move camera faster
R1 + D-pad: Turn camera
L2: Zoom out
R2: Zoom in
Triangle: Higher view
Square: Lower view

Announcer comments
Enter one of the following codes while playing a game to hear the corresponding announcement. You will hear a confirmation sound if you input the code correctly:

Additional batter information
Hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and press left, Square, up, Triangle.

Historical commentary
Hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and press up, Triangle, right, Circle.

Trivia
Hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and press down, X, right, Circle.

Weather
Hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 and press X, down, Triangle, up.

Dynamite Deka 2
Bonus Missions, Extra Characters

Bonus Missions
Complete Missions 1, 2, and 3 for each character and Missions 4, 5, and 6 will open up. Each of the additional missions will correspond to Missions, 1, 2 and 3 with the following changes:

Mission 4 — follows Mission 1, but you will only have 1 Life, all weapons do double damage, and no continues.

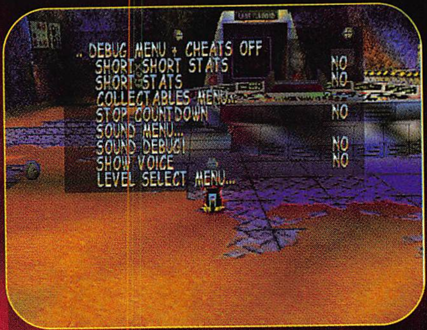
Mission 5 — follows Mission 2, but you have a time limit for each room, and no continues.

Mission 6 — follows Mission 3, but you start with 1 pixel of life, very few health packets, no power ups, and no continues.

Play as the Monkey
To play as the Monkey, you must complete Mission 4, 5, and 6. Monkey will then be selectable at the character screen (he fights identical to Bruno)

Play as Old Skool Bruno
Collect all the illustrations found in the game, and you will unlock old school Bruno (from *Die Hard Arcade*).

Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko
Multiple Gameplay Codes



Debug mode
Pause the game, then hold R2 while pressing up, Circle, right, up, left, right, and down. You will hear a confirmation sound if you input the code correctly. Then, resume the game and press Select to display a list of options including level select, sound debug, collectibles, and more.



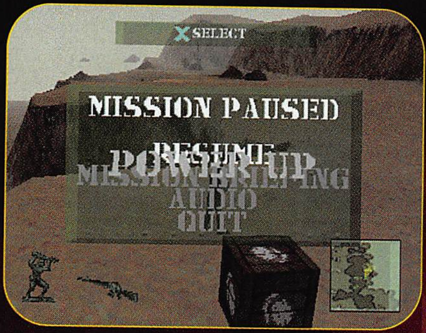
Invincibility
Pause the game, then hold L2 while pressing down, up, left, left, Triangle, right, down. You will hear a confirmation sound if you input the code correctly.



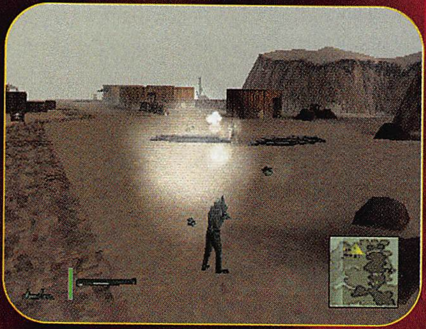
Gex quotes
Pause the game, then hold L2 and press down, right, left, circle, up, and right. You will hear a confirmation sound if you input the code correctly. Resume the game and press Select to have Gex make a comment.

Army Men 3D
All Weapons, Etc.

All Weapons
Start a new game, then pause the game and quickly press Square, Circle, R1, L1, R1+R2.



Campaign Select
At the main menu, quickly press Square, Circle, R1, L1, L1 + R1.





Invincibility
Start a new game, then pause and press Square, Circle, L1, L1 + L2.

RollCage
Everything Code, Turbo Start



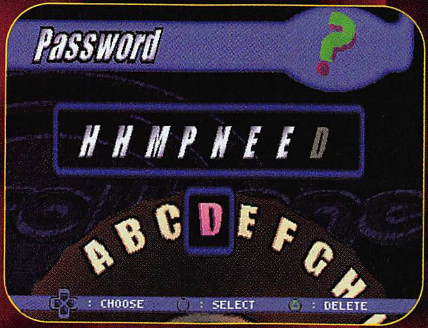
Everything Unlocked
At the Password screen, enter MAXCHEAT. This will prompt a "Invalid Password" message. However, if you go back into the game, this code will unlock all leagues, mirror mode, and Mega Time Trial.





Turbo Start
Start your game as you normally would. Pick Jet as your driver and start a race. As the timer starts counting down, when it gets to "1", hit the accelerate button to get a turbo start.

Harpoon Deathmatch
At the Password screen, enter HAFIJEAF to unlock the Harpoon Deathmatch mode.

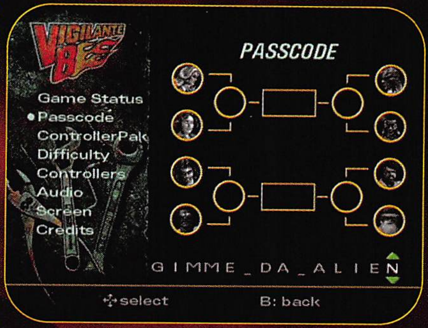


The Big Cheat
At the Password screen, enter HHMPNEED. This will unlock all expert difficulty tracks, the bonus car, Mega Time Trial, mirror mode, and all Deathmatch modes.



Air horn
At the Password screen, enter AIRHORNS. This will prompt an "Invalid Password" message. Start a game and while playing, press Select to hear the horn.

Vigilante 8
Mondo Codus Operandi

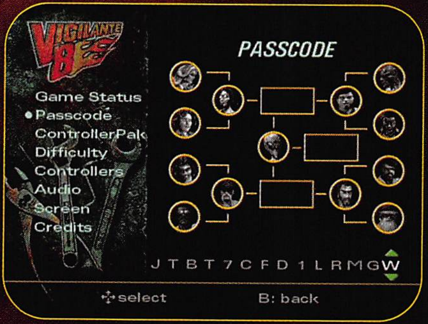


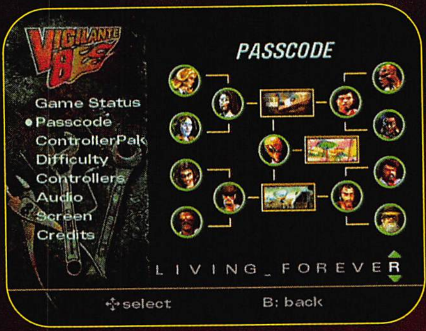


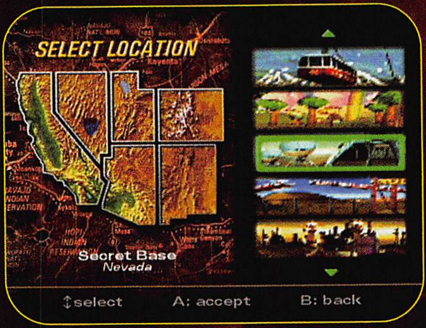
Alien Vehicle
At the Password Screen enter GIMME_DA_ALIEN to play the alien saucer vehicle.



All Vehicles Except the Alien
At the Password Screen enter GANGS_UNLOCKED to unlock the remaining characters.







All Levels, Characters and Vehicles
At the Password Screen enter JTBT7CFD1LRMGW to open up all the stages and cars.

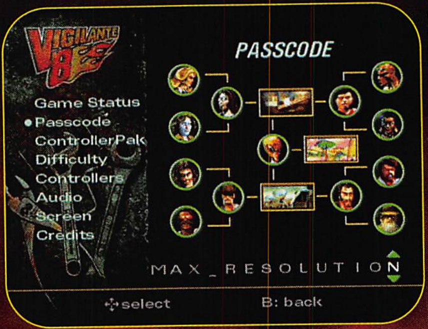


Choose the Same Car
To allow multiple players to use the same car, at the Password Screen enter MIX_MATCH_CARS.

Enable Ultra-High Resolution
At the Password Screen enter MAX_RESOLUTION.



Enhanced Missiles
At the Password Screen enter MISSILE_ATTACK.



God Mode
At the Password Screen enter the password LIVING_FOREVER.

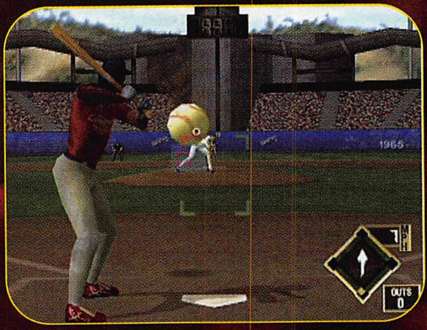
Rapid-Fire Weapons
At the Password Screen enter FIRE_NO_LIMITS.

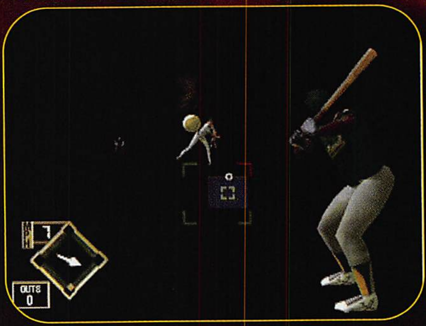
Reduced Gravity
At the Password Screen enter A_MOON_GETAWAY for some major air during jumps.

All-Star Baseball 2000
Gameplay Codes



Ball Trail
At the "Enter Cheats" menu, enter WLDWLDWST for a smoking trail effect on the baseball.

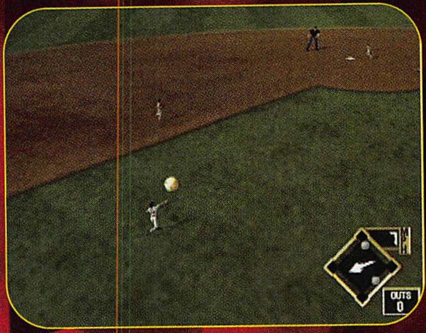




Big Ball Mode (a.k.a. "The Ngo Cheat")
At the "Enter Cheats" menu, enter BCHBLKTPTY for a big baseball.

Blackout Mode
At the "Enter Cheats" menu, enter WTOTL and everything will be pitch black.

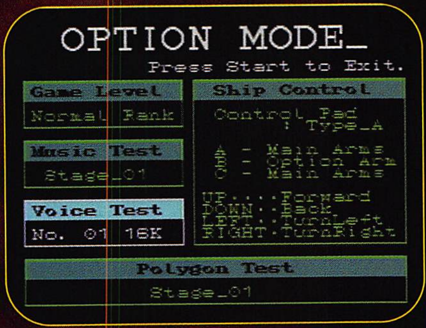
Blind Mode
At the "Enter Cheats" menu, enter MYEYES. The graphics will be blurry.



Small Players Mode
At the "Enter Cheats" menu, enter TOMTHUMB for small players.

Silpheed (Sega CD)
Bonus Graveyard Hocus Pocus

Harder Game
When the introduction starts playing, press B, B, A, C, up, left, right, down, up, and A on Controller 2. Now start a normal game and you should be playing on the hardest difficulty setting.



Level Select
While the introduction is playing, press down, down, up, up, right, left, right, left, A, B, Start. A new "Stage Select" option should appear. Select a level and press A to begin your game.





Shield Recharge
While the introduction is playing, press Right, Left, A, Right, Up, C, B, Down, Left, B, A, Up, Start. While playing, you can recharge your shields by pressing A on Controller Two.



Voice Test
At the title screen, select Options with Controller One. Now hold A + B + C on Controller Two. With these held, press Start on Controller One. In the Option screen you will see a new option called Voice Test.

Lunar: Silver Star Story Mini-Game, FMV Sequences

Lords of Lunar
To play the mini-game "Lords of Lunar" (based on the old skool game *Warlords*), insert the "Making Of Lunar" disc into the PS. When the intro sequence of the making of game begins, press up, down, left, right, Triangle, and Start. You can actually play up to eight human players in this game!

FMV sequences on Disk One
To see the all FMV sequences of Disk One, insert the "Making Of Lunar" disc and enter the "Lords of Lunar" code from above. When you're at the title screen of "Lords of Lunar," insert Disc 1 of *Lunar:SSSC* and choose to exit. The FMV sequences should start playing in the order they're played in the game.

Game Shark Codes

Bloody Roar 2: Bringer of the New Age - PS

Infinite Health P1 & P2
80178A9A 2400

Have All Characters
801C0FF4 FFFF

Have All Movies
801C0FD0 FFFF

Get All Pictures
801C0FFC FFFF
801C0FFE FFFF
801C1000 FFFF
801C1002 FFFF
801C1004 FFFF

Have All Custom
801C0FEC FFFF
801C0FEE FFFF

Need For Speed: High Stakes — PS

Infinite Cash in Account
80115DA4 C9FF
80115DA6 3B9A

Infinite Pursuit Time
8005E1EE 2400

Semi-Drunk Mode
8013E6AC 002F

Drunk Mode
8013E6AC 001F

Heavy Car
801144DC 0002

Unlock Durham Road
80115D2c 0001

Unlock Celtic Ruins
80115D24 0001

Unlock Raceway 2
80115D30 0001

Unlock Raceway
80115D34 0001

Unlock Raceway 3
80115D38 0001

Unlock SnowyRidge
80115D10 0001

Unlock Dolphin Cove
80115D18 0001

Ridge Racer Type 4 — PS

Unlock Extra Trial
800F3B24 0001

Complete Extra Trial
800F3B2C 0101
800F3B2E 0101

Unlock All Team DRT Cars
800F3AE0 FFFF
800F3AE2 FFFF
800F3AE4 FFFF
800F3AE6 FFFF
800F3AE8 FFFF
800F3AEA FFFF
800F3AEC FFFF
800F3AEE FFFF

Unlock All Team MMM Cars
800F3AF0 FFFF
800F3AF2 FFFF
800F3AF4 FFFF
800F3AF6 FFFF
800F3AF8 FFFF
800F3AFA FFFF
800F3AFC FFFF
800F3AFE FFFF

Unlock All Team PRC Cars
800F3B00 FFFF
800F3B02 FFFF
800F3B04 FFFF
800F3B06 FFFF
800F3B08 FFFF
800F3B0A FFFF
800F3B0C FFFF
800F3B0E FFFF

Unlock All Team Solvalou Cars
800F3B10 FFFF
800F3B12 FFFF
800F3B14 FFFF
800F3B16 FFFF
800F3B18 FFFF
800F3B1A FFFF
800F3B1C FFFF
800F3B1E FFFF

All Tracks Unlocked
800F3ADC FFFF
300F3B24 0001
800F3B28 0101
800F3B2C 0101

Infinite Tries
800AD698 0303

Dungeons & Dragons Collection — Saturn Import

Disc 1: Tower of Doom
Master Code
F6000924 C305
B6000B00 0000

Infinite Health
160E0990 00A0

Infinite Silver
160E09C6 00FF

Infinite Exp.
160E09C0 FFFF

Infinite Items
160E0790 0909
160E0792 0909
160E0794 0909
160E0796 0909
160E0798 0909
160E079A 0909
160E079C 0909
160E079E 0909
160E07A0 0909
160E07A2 0909
160E07A4 0909

Star Ocean 2 — PS

Max Fol
8009B610 C9FF
8009B612 3B9A

Infinite Fol
8009B610 FFFF

Save Anywhere
80074628 0001

Max HP
8009A9D4 270F
8009A9DC 270F

Infinite HP in Battle
8009A9DC 270F

Max MP
8009A9E0 270F
8009A9E4 270F

Infinite MP in Battle
8009A9E4 270F

Max STR
8009A9EA 270F

Max CON
8009A9F0 270F

Max DEX
8009A9FC 270F

Max AGL
8009A9F6 270F
Max INT
8009AA02 270F

Max GUTS
3009AA08 00FF

Sketching
3009AA1D 000A

Musical Notation
3009AA1E 000A

Music Instruments
3009AA1F 000A

Tool Knowledge
3009AA20 000A

Mineralogy
3009AA21 000A

Herbal Medicine
3009AA22 000A

Craft
3009AA23 000A

Esthetic Sense
3009AA24 000A

Writing
3009AA25 000A

Effort
3009AA26 000A

Perseverance
3009AA27 000A

Patience
3009AA28 000A

Danger Sense
3009AA29 000A

Biology
3009AA2A 000A

Mental Science
3009AA2B 000A

Kitchen Knife
3009AA2C 000A

Recipe
3009AA2D 000A

Good Eye
3009AA2E 000A

Whistling
3009AA2F 000A

Animal Training
3009AA30 000A

Metal Casting
3009AA31 000A

Scientific Ability
3009AA32 000A

Fairyology
3009AA33 000A

Radar
3009AA34 000A

Piety
3009AA35 000A

Playfulness
3009AA36 000A

Functionality
3009AA37 000A

Courage
3009AA38 000A

Poker Face
3009AA39 000A

Copying
3009AA3A 000A

Mech Knowledge
3009AA3B 000A

Mech Operation
3009AA3C 000A

Below the Belt
3009AA3D 000A

Strong Blow
3009AA3E 000A

Flip
3009AA3F 000A

Counterattack
3009AA40 000A

Feint
3009AA41 000A

Mental Training
3009AA42 000A

Motormouth
3009AA43 000A

Body Control
3009AA44 000A

Spirit Force
3009AA45 000A

Parry
3009AA46 000A

Cancel
3009AA47 000A

Gale
3009AA48 000A

Provocation
3009AA49 000A

Float
3009AA4A 000A

Dungeons and Dragons Collection (SS Import)

Disc 1: Tower of Doom

Master Code
F6000924 C305
B6000B00 0000

Infinite Health
160E0990 00A0

Infinite Silver
160E09C6 00FF

Infinite Exp.
160E09C0 FFFF

Infinite Items
160E0790 0909
160E0792 0909
160E0794 0909
160E0796 0909
160E0798 0909
160E079A 0909
160E079C 0909
160E079E 0909
160E07A0 0909
160E07A2 0909
160E07A4 0909

Disc 2: Shadow Over Mystara

Master Code
F6000924 FFFF
B6002800 0000

Infinite Health
160E0832 0060

Infinite Silver
160E08E4 00FF

Infinite Items In Ring
160E0918 0902

Infinite Health
160E0A32 0060

Infinite Silver
1601F674 0104

Infinite Keys
160E0398 0009

Fatal Fury: Wild Ambition (PS Import)

Infinite Time
800AC994 114E

Player 1 Infinite Health
800AD7EE 0170

Player 2 Infinite Health
800AF00E 0170

Player 1 Infinite Power
800AD820 0030

Player 2 Infinite Power
800AF040 0030

Use Secret Character
300ACA7E 0003

Grandia (PS Import)

Get Lots Of Money After One Battle
8009C68C FFFF

Fast Level Up After One Battle
8009C688 FFFF

Infinite Points For Getting Magic
801A97E0 0001

Infinite Money
80010164 967F
80010166 0098

Rival Schools 2 (PSX Import)

Enable Code
D00A6CFA 1040
800A6CFA 1000

Player 1 Infinite Hp
801EFA02 00C8

Player 2 Infinite Hp
801EFE02 00C8

Player 1 Infinite Sp
801EFC18 0900

Player 2 Infinite Sp
801F0018 0900

Player 1 No Energy
801EFE02 0000

Player 2 No Power
301F0019 0000

Max Point
801F5B04 869F
801F5B06 0001

Metal Gear Solid Integral (PS Import)

(All codes for VR Disc only)

Enable Code for VR Disc
D00C209A 1040
800C209A 1000

Clear Sneaking Mode
800E1050 FFFF
800E1068 FFFF
800E1080 FFFF
800E1098 FFFF

Clear Weapon Mode
800E1052 FFFF
800E1054 FFFF
800E1056 FFFF
800E1058 FFFF
800E105A FFFF
800E106A FFFF
800E106C FFFF
800E106E FFFF
800E1070 FFFF
800E1072 FFFF

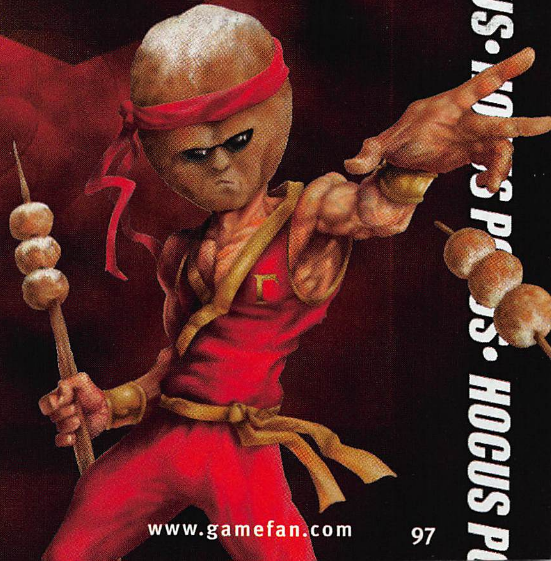
Clear Advavced Mode
800E1082 FFFF
800E1084 FFFF
800E1086 FFFF
800E1088 FFFF
800E108A FFFF
800E109A FFFF
800E109C FFFF
800E109E FFFF
800E10A0 FFFF
800E10A2 FFFF

Clear Special Mode
800E10BC FFFF
800E10D4 FFFF
300E10ED 00FF
300E10EE 00FF
800E1122 FFFF
300E1124 00FF
300E114F 00FF
300E1150 0001
800E11CE FFFF
300E1181 00FF

Infinite Life
800B2A0E 0600
800B2A10 0600

Always Use Stealth
800B2A16 000A

Infinite Socom Ammo
800B2A1A 0064
800B2A1C 0064
800B2A1E 0064



Star Wars: Episode One Racer (N64)

Is the need for speed driving you into headfirst collisions? Are you continually hugging that safe wall for fear of being sideswiped by passing traffic? Are you strong in the Force, but not quite a Jedi? Well then the following codes might give you the edge if you want to be at the top of the pack:

Cheat menu:

Select tournament mode, and select an empty save slot. Now, before you enter any initials hold Z, and enter "RRDEBUG" using L Shift to select each letter. You should see the letters appear in the bottom left corner. Once this is done, highlight "End" and press Z, A, and L shift simultaneously. The words "OK" should appear at the bottom left corner. Now, enter your initials and start a game. Pause anytime and use the D-pad to press left, down, right, and up. The Cheat Menu option should appear. While this code doesn't do anything by itself, it allows you to use multiple cheats at the same time.



Invincibility:

Select tournament mode, and select an empty save slot. Now, before you enter any initials hold Z, and enter "RRJABBA" using L Shift to select each letter. You should see the letters appear in the bottom left corner. Once this is done, highlight "End" and press Z, A, and L shift simultaneously. The words "OK" should appear at the bottom left corner. Now, enter your initials and start a game. Pause anytime and use the D-pad to press left, down, right, and up. You will now be near invincible.



Have 6 Pitdroids

Select tournament mode, and select an empty save slot. Now, before you enter any initials hold Z, and enter "RRPITDROID." using L Shift to select each letter. You should see the letters appear in the bottom left corner. Once this is done, highlight "End" and press Z, A, and L shift simultaneously. The words "OK" should appear at the bottom left corner. Now, enter your initials and start a game. At Watto's shop, press up, down, left, right, right, up.

Mirror mode:

Select tournament mode, and select an empty save slot. Now, before you enter any initials hold Z, and enter "RRTHEBEAST" using L Shift to select each letter. You should see the letters appear in the bottom left corner. Once this is done, highlight "End" and press Z, A, and L shift simultaneously. The words "OK" should appear at the bottom left corner. Now, enter your initials and start a game. Pause anytime and use the D-pad to press left, down, right, and up. You'll be racing the selected track backwards.

Dual control option:

Make sure you have two N64 pads plugged into ports #1 and #3. Now, select tournament mode, and select an empty save slot. Now, before you enter any initials hold Z, and enter "RRDUAL" using L Shift to select each letter. You should see the letters appear in the bottom left corner. Once this is done, highlight "End" and press Z, A, and L shift simultaneously. The words "OK" should appear at the bottom left corner. Now, enter your initials and start a game.



You can now use both N64 controllers to pilot your pod race

Bonus pilot:

Select tournament mode, then highlight an unused position on the name entry screen. Hold Z and enter RRJINNR as a name by pressing L to select each letter. Select "End, then press L followed by A.

Taunt opponent:

Select tournament mode. Hold Z and press A to begin race at the menu. An intermission that features your character and opponent taunting each other will appear. Pres R(2) during the race for more taunts.

Quick start:

Press A just as the number one disappears for a quick star

Some tips from Master Dango, Jedi Gamer

As you may know, pod racing is both very fast and very dangerous. While this game isn't extremely difficult, the ater tracks (especially the invitational races) become nsanely strenuous on the reflexes. Mastering some of he following subtle techniques in this game will ensure ou the championship title of pod racing.

Boosting

On long straight-aways, boosting is a very powerful echnique. In order to perform a turbo boost, when ou're going at top speed, hold up on the Analog Stick while accelerating. You're speed will begin to go up a





it and you should see green indicator flash. low, release A and ress it again, and ou'll get a super oost of speed that ou can maintain. While your engines an catch on fire from rolonged boosting, 's pretty easy to extinguish the flames from such oosting. Use the boost whenever you can!

Veering and Tilting

sing the C-Left and C-Right buttons will make your odracer tilt 90 degrees. This maneuver is extremely useful, not only to get through small cracks, but it help in those really tight turns. Also, if you know you're going to hit a wall, tilt the podracer so that it hits the bottom of your vehicle. This lessens the damage dramatically.



Parts Listing

Here is the complete listing of parts and their price in the game. Note, there is a sixth part for every category that you can only get in the junkyard.

ACCELERATION
Dual 20PCX Injector — 800
44 PCX Injector — 2200
Dual 32PCX Injector — 5600
Quad 32PCX Injector — 7000
Quad 44PCX Injector — 10400

AIR BRAKES
Mark II Air Brake — 700
Mark III Air Brake — 1400
Mark IV Air Brake — 3600
Mark V Air Brake — 7000
Tri-jet Air Brake — 10400

COOLING
Coolant Radiator — 50
Stack-3 Radiator — 100
Stack-6 Radiator — 300
Rod Coolant Pump — 900
Dual Coolant Pump — 2700

REPAIR
Single Power Cell — 150
Dual Power Cell — 300
Quad Power Cell — 800
Cluster Power Plug — 1400
Rotary Power Plug — 4000

TOP SPEED
Plug2 Thrust Coil — 1000
Plug3 Thrust Coil — 2400
Plug5 Thrust Coil — 6000
Plug8 Thrust Coil — 14000
Block5 Thrust Coil — 17500

TRACTION
R-20 Repulsorgrip — 250
R-60 Repulsorgrip — 400
R-80 Repulsorgrip — 600
R-100 Repulsorgrip — 1200
R-300 Repulsorgrip — 2600

TURNING
Control Linkage — 200
Control Shift Plate — 400
Control Vectro Jet — 700
Control Coupling — 1600
Control Nozzle — 3800

Launch Wars Pt. 1: The FF Menace

Two years ago, Square released *Final Fantasy VII* on September 9th, so they could do the cool 9-9-97 promotion. Well, instead of bringing out *FFVIII* on 9-9-99, the date has been pushed up a couple days to 9-7-99. Could it be that Square EA doesn't want kids to walk into a game store September 9th and have to choose between *FFVIII* and Sega's shiny new Dreamcast? If all goes well for Square, gamers will be $50 short when buying a DC September 9th.

Final Fantasy... IX?

While *Final Fantasy VIII* hasn't been released in the U.S. yet, there's already talk of *Final Fantasy IX* being in development. What's adding more fuel to the rumor mill fire is the leaking of top secret design docs for an as-yet-unnamed Square title onto the Internet. Coming from an anonymous source, these characters sketches and artwork found their way onto fan sites on the World Wide Web. When reached for comment, Square said the following: "We are focusing on *Final Fantasy VIII* and have no information on sequels to this title." Whether the leaked design docs were legit, we got a big "No comment." Though this is much what we expected, if the artwork was fake, they would have denounced it as fake, right?

Launch Wars Pt. 2: An Affordable Hope

In last month's Other Stuff, we reported that the Dreamcast would retail in the U.S. for $199 on September 9th with a 56k modem packed in. Well, to combat this great deal, Nintendo and Sony will surely drop the price of their consoles to less than $100. KayBee Toys has already dropped the price to an affordable $99 for both systems, and it's expected Sony and Nintendo will make official announcements shortly. Not wishing the competition to have the upper hand in the price wars, Sega of Japan has officially reduced the price of the Japanese Dreamcast to $169 (converted from yen to dollars), though this package is without a modem. If Sega can drop the price in Japan, could we see yet another price slash by Christmas?

Launch Wars Pt. 3: Sony Strikes Back

We find it hard to believe, but sources in Japan are hinting that Sony is so far ahead of the game that they're considering launching the PlayStation 2 on 9-9-99 in Japan to steal the thunder from the launch of Sega's Dreamcast in the U.S. Considering that Sony was reportedly having problems manufacturing the chip for their next-gen console in mass quantity, this 'sudden launch' seems extremely unlikely, but stranger things have happened...

Launch Wars Pt. 4: Return of the Big "N"

While everybody focuses in on Dreamcast and PS2 comparisons, Nintendo lurks in the background, quietly commanding the attention of a whole section of the gaming community waiting to hear any news concerning the Dolphin (Nintendo's next generation console after the N64). Well, Nintendo fans, word has it that the Dolphin controller will hook up with your Game Boy, much like Sega's VMS plugs into the Dreamcast controller. Imagine picking sports plays and such on your Game Boy. At least that plug-in peripheral will have a multi-million user installed base before the system launches...





Check out these cool accessories from Pelican. Both the TILT Pak and the TILT Force 2 use state-of-the-art motion sensing technology to turn your controller into a steering wheel. Just hold your pad by the sides, and rotate it like a steering wheel! The sensors detect your movement, and you'll be able to play driving games without getting your thumb sore. Cool!

DD Will Not Go Quietly Into The Night...

Speaking of Nintendo peripherals... In last month's Other Stuff, we mentioned that the Nintendo 64 DD (a readable/writeable peripheral) was dead and would **not** come out. Well... we were half right. Despite developer skepticism, constant delays, and consumer apathy, the ill-fated peripheral will be coming out in Japan. On the other hand, Nintendo of America will not be releasing it. So if you're dying to play DD games like *Mario Paint, Zelda Gaiden*, and a rumored *SimCity* game, then you're going to have to brave the import waters, my Nintendo-loving friends.

Zelda: A Link From the Past

I'm sure you're all waiting with bated breath concerning any news of a new *Zelda* title in development, right? Well, word among the grapevine says that a new *Zelda* game is in development with the tentative title *Zelda Gaiden*. While this will be a 64DD game in Japan, since the peripheral isn't coming to the U.S., we will probably see a cartridge version of *ZG*. Wouldn't that be a fitting way for Nintendo to usher out the N64 and tide gamers over till the Dolphin makes its big splash? We're hearing that the game will star Young Link, not Adult Link.

Onimusha — First Casualty of the Console Wars?

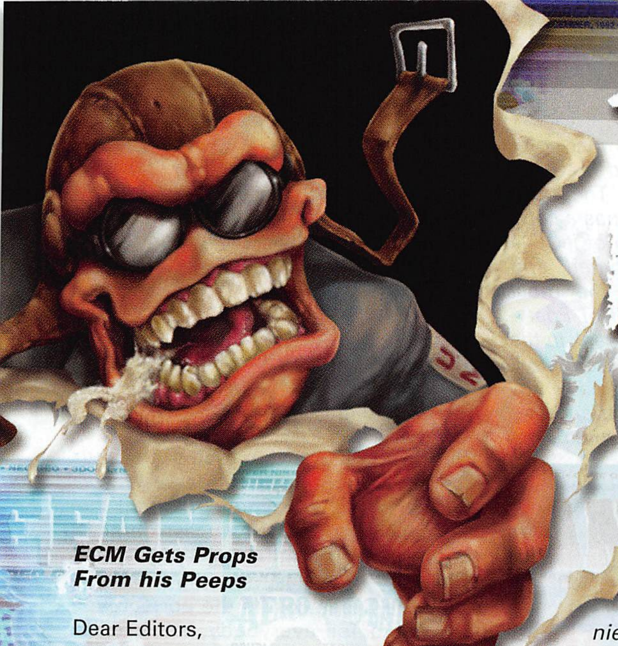
As the Console Wars heat up, it appears we might be feeling the effects already. *Onimusha*, a much-anticipated Capcom title described as *Resident Evil* meets *Tenchu*, is rumored to be no longer in development for PS. From what we hear, Capcom is turning this blockbuster game into a PS2 title. Guess we'll have to wait a little longer, but it should all be worth it.

Launch Wars Pt. 5: Sega Sweetens the Deal?

SNK's new game, *King of Fighters '99* (a 2D and 3D fighter) is rumored to be a U.S. Dreamcast launch title. Also, the Dreamcast is planning to debut with a free sample disc, giving you a brief glimpse of future titles. Well, sources suggest a full Dreamcast game will be available with that sample disc. One name they're throwing around is *Sega Rally 2*. Let's hope this isn't idle speculation.

Loose Tidbits

Resident Evil 2 is coming to Dreamcast. *Syphon Filter 2* is in development for PlayStation. *Diddy Kong Racing* for the Game Boy has been canned. And for the last time, stop yer bitching... no *Metroid* game is in development for N64. It's possible EA will bring us *Koudelka*, an RPG developed by Sacnoth (including former members of Square). Sources are saying that the NGPC will be able to support up to 64 players with wireless link compatibility, though no games are available yet that would take advantage of something ridiculous like that.



THE POSTMEISTER!

Write to me, I'm running for president!!!
The Postmeister
6301 DeSoto Avenue Suite E
Woodland Hills, CA 91367

ECM Gets Props From his Peeps

Dear Editors,

I just had to write to tell you how much I enjoyed your May editorial. Such an honest and direct approach is rare in this industry — but certainly appreciated. I know many who share your perspective. Recently, on the internet, a thread was circulating called "The Thrill Is Gone." In the thread, hard core gamers were describing how the never-ending stream of crappy sequels was destroying their enjoyment of video games. Some were even predicting a crash of 1983 proportions.

The overall consensus to those who felt so disillusioned? Get a Dreamcast. I said it. Others said it. The Dreamcast has restored faith in gaming for many many hard core players. Finally, it seems that true 16-bit gameplay has made its way into 3D.

I will be rooting for Sega in the months ahead. And given what I've seen of their system and their games — I am sure they will do well.

Regards,

Wes Pringle
Via the Internet

On the day your letter came in, I was in the middle of organizing a full-scale assault on the local grocer, who has refused to discontinue the sale of canned meat products despite my many threats and a full-scale Postal picket-line: a force of but one lone protestor which brought their entire business to nigh-standstill. One should never underestimate the power of Post-Fu's most dangerous and potentially deadly discipline: going without bathing for a week! It is the wisdom of the ancients that I pass on to only my most adept and socially-responsible pupils, and I will share it with you now... a skunk cannot smell its own stink. Especially when that particular skunk's nasal passages no longer work because of a freak Blowmeister Games accident in years long past... but I digress.

When I began to ponder this letter, it struck me that perhaps the Postal Skunk Principles are carrying over to the video game industry, as well. How often have we seen companies like Nintendo and Sony (and yes, occasionally even Sega) pointing to the high sales of very bad games, claiming that they're actually quite good because they sold so well? Is it possible that after so many titles have come down the pike (both good and bad), publishers are having a hard time figuring out which ones are actually good, and which ones aren't? If a bona fide stinker still sells massive numbers while an excellent title sells poorly, is it then possible that gamers at large have grown so accustomed to the stench that they are unable to enjoy the sweet scents of gaming excellence when they occasionally waft through the air? Say it ain't so!

Sure, plenty of the games coming to the Dreamcast look and play great... but where there is light, there must be shadows, and you can be certain that Sega's little powerhouse will have its share of losers — it's the nature of the business. However, we can hope that Sega will improve on the ratio of good to bad on their console, and we can also hope that the publishers will discriminate a little bit more on what they crank out for the DC. The staff of GameFan have highly-tuned gaming 'nostrils,' so when you're not sure about your next gaming purchase, just pick up our magazine or visit the Website, and get a strong, deep whiff of what we're cooking!

Posty Ain't Nobody's Pen-Pal...

Hello my brutha! How's the gaming? I have some questions for your all-mighty-ness.

1.) Will there ever be a *Gundam* game to come out in the US? Because when I sit down and play *Battle Masters* or *Z-Gundam*, I'm PO'ed that a publisher hasn't picked them up yet, oh well, only time, and luck, will tell.

2.) Did you ever find Chim-Chim (the monkey buddy from *Speed Racer*), well, a little, how should I say... Fruity?

3.) What's your musical preference? You have probably answered this question plus one times, but I probably missed that issue.

4.) My girlfriend wants to know if you can get to level 27 in GameBoy *Tetris Type A*... HEY! DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT! She wanted to know.

5.) If my friends and myself were to make an independent comic book, would you buy a copy? It's gonna be the dilly yo! Anyway, it'll be fantasy based; in about a year, look for a comic called Serinity, if you do this I will give you a hug.

And last but most certainly not least...

6.) How many licks does it REALLY take to get to the center of a Tootsie Pop!? I think you fellas should have a survey, have all the readers try it out, then take an average!

P.S. Well, this was my FIRST letter I EVER wrote into a magazine... I hope I didn't make an ass of myself. I'll be your best friend if you print this!

Jordan Wiseman
Via the Internet

Though I've always got an entourage of gamers in tow who want nothing more than to glean even the most superficial understanding of the gaming world from me, it is the rarest of men who is bold enough to make a bid for my friendship. Though women the world over will fight to the death in a bid for my affections, it is not something I offer lightly... and the fact that you have offered your friendship to me, if only I were to run your letter is at once both offensive and deliciously arrogant. Therefore, I will refrain from my usual reaction of issuing a swift S.T.B. (Steel Toed Boot) and sending you on your way humbled and bleeding, and instead answer your questions as only I can... prepare yourself.

1.) Yes, Bandai's enormously popular mecha series is on its way to the Dreamcast in a game called Gundam 0079 Side Story, *and Sega currently has plans to publish the game themselves here in America. It was shown in Sega's booth at E3, and definitely has that DC graphical flair.*

2.) While I find monkeys in general a little fruity, and Speed Racer *in particular*

excessively fruity, any character named Chim-Chim takes the Chiquita title hands-down.

3.) The Postmeister likes just about any music he comes in contact with, except for the following: Country, Rap, Hip-Hop and R&B, Classic Rock, Polka, Bluegrass, Chamber Choir, Yodeling, Traveling Minstrels, Hog-Callers, and the Merry-Go-Round organ at any given Amusement Park. My favorite sounds are the tortured screams of the GameFan staff when ECM puts on some of those golden '80s standards by Wham!, The Bangles, Culture Club, or if I'm really lucky... Hall & Oates!

4.) I'm a little rusty, but if I'm not mistaken your woman just hit on me in Tetris*-code... you'd better keep an eye on her, she's a wild one!*

5.) I would have to work it into my $5 budget, and it just doesn't look like that's gonna happen... of course, if you send it as a campaign contribution it's tax-deductible... anything for the cause, my friends!

6.) You're supposed to lick those things?

Feeling Like He Just Got Slugged...

Dear GameFan Magazine:

Guys, I'm having one extremely hard time finding an imported copy of *Metal Slug* for the Sega Saturn!!

I've run up my phone bill three times over by calling video game/mail-order companies like: Electronics Boutique, Game Express, P&L, Game Dude, Buy Rite, NCS and Tommo!!! Why is it that no one seems to have a copy!?!?

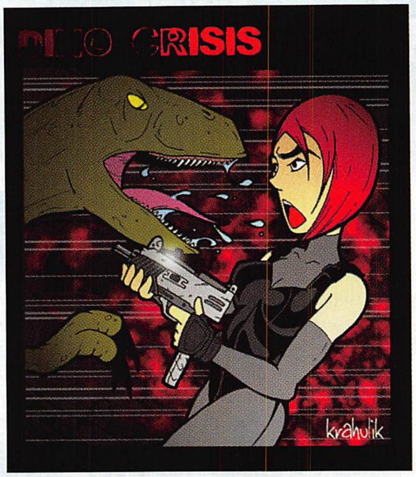
Aww, help me, please!!! If you guys happen to have a copy at GameFan that I can buy off of you, just let me know how much, who & where to send the postal money order to! Or, tell me where I can order it from!

Y'know, it's a very hard pill for a "Sega faithful" to swallow when you see your system go under, & watch my "Sega" sit on the sidelines of the video game industry for more than a year! But, ironically, it's even harder trying to find a copy of *Metal Slug*!

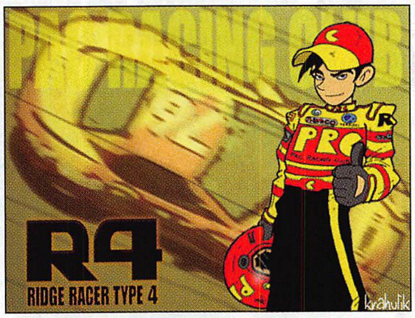
Once again, if you can, please help me find a copy of this fabulous game!

Larue "Soy Sauce" Binder
Los Angeles, C.A.

Even though I try to do everything in my power to aid Posty-fans the world over in their various gaming plights, I'm afraid this one has even the most powerful man in gaming stumped like Alex Trebek without his cue cards. The problem is, everyone I know who has a copy of this game refuses to let go of it. I've bribed, begged, pleaded, whined, and even threatened to invoke the most feared and revered law in all of Postydom, the P.T.F.F. (Punch That Freak in the Face) law... all to no effect. It is a powerful thing that renders the P.T.F.F. law completely ineffective, my friends — and Metal Slug *is just such a force.*



Our art director Reubus has still been getting art from Posty-Fans, and these two come courtesy of an artist named Krahulik. Not sure where he's from or what kinda name that is, but he's good!



To the most resourceful gamers in the world, online auction sites such as Ebay are usually the first stop. The more adventurous often wander into the untamed wilds of Usenet to tempt their fates doing business with the hundreds of turbo-sausages populating that area of the Net. But because this is the Saturn we're talking about, you may be forced to continue bugging every mail order and import gaming shop you know of from now until the end of time in order to get a copy of this rare and precious gem.

Patience and persistence are your allies, my friend... impatience is your enemy. Searching for rare imports is like trying to find that perfect, undamaged box of frozen Pizza Rolls; it's an arduous process that can stretch on for weeks, months — perhaps even years. But the payoff... ahh, the payoff is one of the sweetest a human being can experience, isn't it? So search on, my friend... search on!

Planning a Future With Sega's DC?

To The Almighty Posty,

We are but mere pebbles to your almighty mountain about games. I was just wondering if you could tell me what the first five Dreamcast games I should get are, and how long do you think the Dreamcast is going to last? I think the Dreamcast is the perfect type of system for everybody because it's not enormous in strength but the games & gameplay are there. It has the power to make 2D & arcade games too... it's perfect. Now if only there was a Dreamcast *Pong*.

P.S. Love the mag & hope you become president!

Kevin D.
Zillah, WA

Yes, but even the drop of a pebble causes ripples throughout my tranquil lake, and reminds the gaming giant who lives within that once again, his unique services are required. I will answer the call as I always do, because that's why I'm here... and that's why you came.

When the Dreamcast launches in America, it will have an array of delightful titles to tantalize and excite... but for those of us on a budget, not every game can be had! It is a problem that will be encountered by thousands of gamers who reach for their tragically trim pocketbooks on 9-9-99, and I will do my best to offer guidance. The first problem in answering this question is simple... I don't know what kind of games you like! GameFan's staff can point out all the best games for each system (and we do, we do!) but it's really up to you, the gamer, to make the decision based on your unique tastes.

Hollywood Video should be doing a rental program months before the Dreamcast is sold in America, but my guess is that thing's gonna be tougher to find for rent than a copy of Titanic on Valentine's Day. My suggestion? Hit the phone book and see if there are any import shops near you... check them out and see if they'll let you play some of the games that are already available. And then of course, there's the obvious: Read GameFan religiously!

Though I cannot misguide you by forcing you to choose the five Dreamcast

games I personally like best, I must applaud you on making Posty your candidate for the presidency of the United States. In a Postal Presidency, games like Dreamcast Pong would not be such a laughable fantasy obviously conjured up in a miguided gamer's Twinkie & Jolt-induced stupor, but would instead be inching their way toward reality on some plane of existence (though probably not ours). Remember fans, it's Postmeister in 2001: Vote early, and vote often!

Let's Go Space Truckin'... C'mon!

Where can I get a truck like yours? If I can't get one of my own, could you at least let me drive it just once? Please?

Amy Kasumito
Via the Internet

I see you're an aficionado of finely crafted automobiles, Amy... allow me to complement your taste and sophistication. Clearly you know your wheels. However, I must warn you that this truck has been custom built from the ground-up with yours truly in mind. No mere mortal can pilot this monster; it requires cat-like reflexes, an iron will, and incredible good looks to keep this beast under control... and for that reason, I cannot in good conscience allow anyone astride this iron steed other than myself. Trust me, it is for your own safety and well-being... El Niño once thought his massive brawn sufficient to contain the fearsome might of my four-wheeled earth-crusher, but he quickly found his ability woefully lacking. Losing control of the beast, he single-handedly leveled a local mini-mall with the efficiency of a six-point earthquake.

So you see Amy, much as I would like to accommodate you, I'm afraid the safety of the public at large has to take priority.



Busty women will always have a home here in Postmeister! Even though I don't know who this fine specimen is, I do know what I like! This lovely lass was submitted by Andrew Bremer of LaCrosse, WI

The Last Rites For Sega Saturn

First off, I've gotta say this. You rock, Posty! Every time I pick up a GameFan issue, yours is the first section I read. Seriously. Anyhow, I'm writing cause I'm a big Sega Saturn Fan, due to the imports. I was wondering that since SOA isn't going to make any more SS games, will SOJ follow?

Doku Ku99
Via the Internet

Because you led off by telling me what a fan you are of our magazine and how religiously you read my section, I thought for sure that your letter would fill me with joy, secure in the knowledge that yet another fine gamer has been educated by our pages... but alas, it was not meant to be. Where have you been for the last four or five months, my excessively-sheltered import fiend? The Saturn was declared D.O.A. by Sega of America just around the same time their Japanese counterpart gave up the ghost... There is no new Saturn development going on at SoA or SoJ... or just about anywhere else, to be honest. Whatever was left over when Sega read the Saturn its burial rites is slowly trickling out, but that's all she wrote on that machine.

So, if you want to continue to enjoy your Saturn, it looks like you'll have to investigate the backlog of imports that you might have missed, which should be on clearance at most import houses right about now. See, there's this little machine Sega's got going right now called the Dreamcast, and supposedly it's really hot stuff... perhaps you should check into it?

Can't Get Enough GameBoy?

Hey Posty,

I wasn't sure who to address my concern to, but for as long as I've been reading your mag you seem to be the nicest and most knowledgeable. I don't know how many readers agree with me, but I was wondering why the color GameBoy isn't covered more in-depth? I understand it may not be as cutting edge as the Dreamcast or the PSY (I plan to get a Dreamcast... die hard Sega fan) but I love the little machine. I am most curious about the *R-Type* title, *Super Mario Bros.*, and also *Street Fighter* for the GameBoy. Can u update me on these titles and point me to any reviews?

Mike
Via the Internet



No woman can resist the raw, animal magnetism of the Postmeister! This image of Darkstalkers' Hsien-Ko comes to us from Lowena Ko of Coquitlam, B.C. Good work!

GameFan has always been about the latest and hottest, and even though the GameBoy has been colorized it's still... well, it's the same old GameBoy that we've been playing for over ten years now. Now we've got the Neo-Geo Pocket Color and Bandai's Wonderswan to contend with too... What's a pocket games fanatic to do?

Go online baby, that's what! By the time you read this, GameFan will have slapped its new Web design online, replete with an entire section dedicated to portable gaming. In this section you'll be able to find previews, reviews and features on the latest goings-on with your favorite consoles-to-go, so next time you're about to boogie across the electric waves of the Net, be sure to make a stop at GameFan Online for the latest on all your favorite cutting-edge consoles, as well as the latest in portable video games!

Waffle Chips... Or Silicon Wafers?

Dear Posty,

Before I get to my question I must first go through the formalities and brown-nose you guys. Posty, you and GameFan Magazine are hands down the greatest. From AnimeFan to Postmeister, you guys are simply 'Da Bomb'!!!

Now that I'm done with the formalities I have some questions concerning the Dreamcast.

1.) Will DC have the 56k modem included for the stated $199? Dreamcast's launch is only months away and Sega is still not releasing any solid information on the Dreamcast in America!

2.) Besides *Sega Rally 2*, what other games are supposed to be available on DC's launch date? Also, what about the rumor that *Sega Rally 2* will be included with the Dreamcast?

3.) Can we expect Konami to do any *Metal Gear* sequels for the DC?

4.) What is Sega up to? Their web site does not even have any info on the Dreamcast!

Thanks and if you answer all my questions satisfactorily I might even send you some of those waffle chips that you love so much.

Robert J Hisle
Via the Internet

Ahhh, he tempts me with those tasty fried morsels, knowing how powerless I am in their presence. Just as Superman is to Kryptonite, is Posty to his Waffle Chips. Chewy, crispy, delightful wafers... they're a little taste of Heaven on earth, I tell you! Oh yes, the chips shall be mine, in return for the gifts of gaming knowledge as only I can deliver them! Get ready to fork over the goods, and have the ketchup ready, pal!

1.) Yes, Sega finally confirmed that the American Dreamcast will indeed contain a modem for the list price of the system. The company is being tight-lipped about the system's launch in order to build the anticipation for its release, but it's not always good to be TOO quiet...

2.) The lineup seems to change every day, so I'm not going to pin it down for you... keep track of all the "comings and goings" by checking GameFan Online. However, I can tell you that the system isn't going to arrive packed with games — just a sampler disc containing playable demos and movies.

3.) I think you can expect Konami to do any games they think will make money on the Dreamcast. Do I think that means a Metal Gear title? You'd better believe it, son!

4.) Sega's staying pretty busy these days... after all, their website isn't exactly your only option for getting news and info about the Dreamcast out there on the Net, now is it?

Sega Refuses To Arm Gamers...

Only the master of all he surveys can possibly answer this question, so I beseech ye oh Postal one — nay, I prostrate myself before you! Please, I ask only for a morsel of your vast and ponderous wisdom. Will you please explain to me why Sega isn't going to release the DC light gun in America? Ok, so I can understand Sega being sympathetic about violence happening in American society today, but surely they don't think they're helping matters by releasing shoot-em-ups without the shooter-upper? What message is Sega trying to send here? Or are they just trying to save themselves a public relations embarrassment with news crews knocking down their doors asking why they're so irresponsible as to produce a toy gun for use with their violent video games? Help me understand, Posty... your cup of knowledge is overflowing, so please let a few drops land on me!

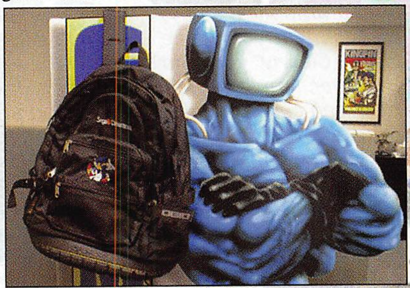
Jimmy Brown
Via the Internet

Jimmy has done as thousands upon thousands of other Posty-fans have, and humbled himself before me as he knows he must, for it is the only circumstance under which the knowledge can flow. Unfortunately, I'm afraid you're not going to like the answers you receive on this day, my loyal Postal warrior... it seems Sega is afraid of their guns being used unsuccessfully in thousands of drive-by pointings and failed hold-ups around the United States after the release of House of the Dead 2. *There must have also been a great deal of worry from the law enforcement around the nation as well, because the gun clearly resembles the firearms used by many violent offenders... from other planets, of course, but offenders nevertheless.*

Get real... The reason is simple: Sega is incredibly afraid of bad press going into the launch of their new console. They don't want anything detracting from possible sales of the system, and the last things they need to deal with are boycotts and picketing from parents groups who feel the release of a light-gun was badly-timed or irresponsible. On the one hand Sega will stand up and tell you that their games don't cause kids to go off the deep end and kill each other, and then on the other they'll bow to public opinion and not release the light gun. Welcome to corporate America.

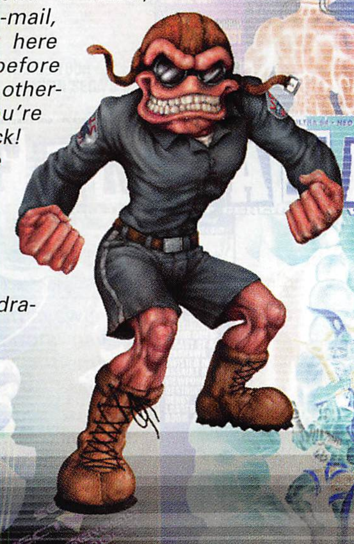
Not to worry... where Sega passed, there will be several third-party manufacturers providing guns that look and handle far more realistically than the futuristic-looking, completely benign model that Sega was offering. Consider it a lesson learned in the tangled web of American marketing, my friends.

I believe the time has come for yours truly to formulate a contest, in order to stimulate the creative juices of all of the artistically-inclined Posty-Fans in our audience! As you all know, next month is the due date for Sega's little speed demon, the Dreamcast. To commemorate the launch of the system I thought we'd put something really cool up for grabs... so here it is.



I was going to use it as a replacement for my tattered, worn-out, less-than-fresh-smelling mailbag, but because I'm such a giving, caring human being I will put it up for grabs. This awesome looking, sturdy Dreamcast backpack is an ultra-rare item that will make you the envy of all your friends. Just send your best videogame-related art, either pencils or colored (preferably colored), and make sure it reaches us by the magic date of 9-9-99! Remember though, your art cannot be returned, so do what you gotta do.

Only one winner will be chosen, and their art will be published in these pages! Send a letter, send an e-mail, but get it here on or before Sept. 9th, otherwise you're out of luck! Include me in the picture, and your odds of winning improve dramatically!




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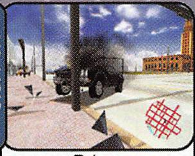
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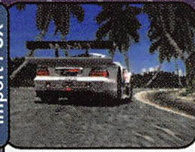
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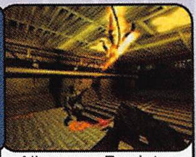
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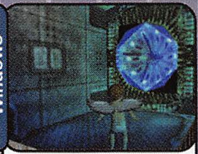
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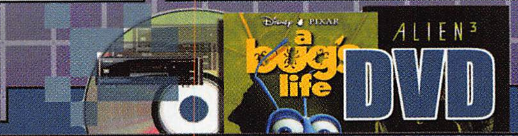
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